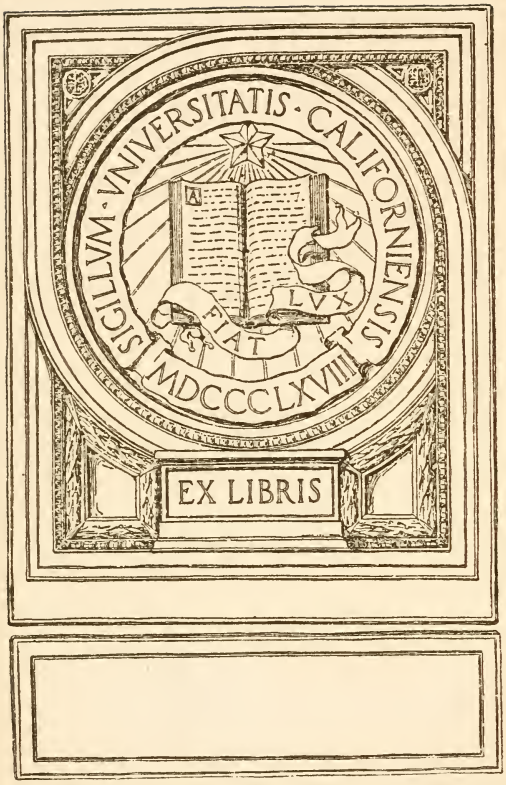
TRAVELS IN THE PYRENEES

V·C·SCOTT O'CONNOR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TRAVELS IN THE PYRENEES

From the painting by HENRY PERRAULT

THE MARCH OF HANNIBAL TO ROUSSILLON

TRAVELS IN THE PYRENEES

INCLUDING ANDORRA AND THE COAST FROM BARCELONA TO CARCASSONNE

BY

V. C. SCOTT O'CONNOR

AUTHOR OF

"THE SILKEN EAST," "MANDALAY AND OTHER OLD CITIES OF BURMA,"

ETC.

WITH FOUR COLOURED PLATES AND ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHT OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS, AND A MAP

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TO D., V., AND H.

PREFACE

THE Atlantic Pyrenees from St. Jean de Luz to Luchon have long been known to the English traveller. But how few know anything of the Eastern Pyrenees, whose valleys run down to replenish the inland sea! Even Monsieur Taine, who travels in the Pyrenees and could compress a book into a sentence, had nothing to say about them. Yet this country, with its superb climate and historic associations, is worthy of a wider fame.

How well I remember my own first introduction to it a lustrum ago! It was early in April, and I was returning homewards from the East. Our English summer was yet a long way off, and I was invited to stay at "Vernet in the Pyrenees." I had never heard of Vernet, but I was told that I should get there if I took the night train from Marseilles, and with this comforting assurance I went to sleep. But at Narbonne I was hastily turned out upon a cold platform, and the train went flying through the night across France to Bordeaux and Toulouse. And yet again at Perpignan, whose fame had never reached my ears, I was dropped by the wayside, for it seemed that *this* train was bound for Spain. It was not till the dawn had come that I was able to resume my troubled journey to Vernet-les-Bains. The train now seemed to leave the open seacoast and turn up a wide plain with hills upon either side; and there, right above me, rose into the cloudless sky the most wonderful snow-mountain, glistening with radiance in the bright morning light. Surely had I never seen anything more beautiful than this! It might have been Olympus himself, it rose so majestically above the plain.

It was the Canigou, and I shall never forget the vivid impression it left upon my eyes, dulled from want of sleep and the fatigues of the journey. It came like a joyous call to life, and I looked about me with a fresh and startled interest. It was clear that here was the Fabled Mountain, the Giver of all good things, while at its feet was the prosperous plain—now, as I looked out upon it, the very image of spring. It is only after long absence in the tropics that one can truly estimate the wonder and the beauty of spring in our Northern lands, so easily do we grow accustomed to the utmost miracles of Nature. Here were the dark old vines, gnarled and grim after their winter sleep; while at their tops were breaking the new infant shoots, soon to cover with their lucent green the broad brown acres of this natural wineland. And here in the midst of their serried ranks the ploughman behind his cattle was cleaving the earth in furrows and turning it up to the sun. Here were streams of living water, bright with the sparkle of their swift descent from snowy heights, and orchards upon orchards in a long and seemingly endless procession, blowing with the most beautiful of all the flowers in the world. Dark cypresses and olive groves were here to balance with their still perfection and sombre hues, the light fragile beauties of the season.

It was a Mediterranean landscape, fraught with that historic significance that is inseparable from these lands that border the old-world sea. The Olive, the Cypress, and the Vine—what a magic of association is involved in this leafy trinity of the South! I for one never look upon a cypress, with its dark grave outline and perfect form, without thinking of the Great King and of Salamis, and of all the successive hosts of Islam which have beaten themselves upon Christendom in vain. And here I remembered that I was upon the very threshold of some of their greatest triumphs and disasters.

The plain itself, as I looked out of the carriage, was dotted with white villas and glinting towns, while upon the foothills, clustering like flights of birds up some eminence, were the Catalan villages, grey and sombre and of an immemorial antiquity. Above them rose the battlemented towers of old

churches, set about them often were remnants of old loop-holed walls, while upon almost inaccessible peaks, haughtily dominating the surrounding world, were ruined towers and the mighty walls of feudal castles, nameless to me then, but famous, as I know now, in the history of the land. Clear-cut against the sky, these old watch-towers, which still bear Arab names, stood up like beacons, manifestly here to warn the plainsmen of invasion and approaching war.

At Villefranche the train came to a stop under the grim walls of a fortress designed by Vauban, and, the morning being still very young, I took my seat by the driver on the diligence, and so came, after an hour's slow ascent up a narrowing lateral valley, to Vernet, right under the mighty walls of the Canigou.

Since then a good deal of my life has been spent in this attractive country: upon its mountain-sides, rosy in June with miles upon miles of rhododendrons; out on its wide and wind-swept plain, where the green raying vines reach out in millions to the horizon; in its little seacoast towns, with their blue sheltered harbours on the edge of the Mediterranean; in the soft sombre interiors of its old Catholic cathedrals and churches, each a poem in itself with its incense and its almost despairing cry to the Invisible and the Unknown; in old inns where the landlord, in his white cap and apron, still does the cooking, and in *hôtels de luxe* contrived to meet the most pampered taste; in hospitable Métairies in the society of people charming as only French people can be, and in old châteaux built a thousand years ago; in primitive villages, where the people have scarcely yet emerged from the Middle Ages; in princely old cities like Gerona, and Seo d'Urgell, where a Spanish Bishop is still a temporal Sovereign; and in the squalid homes of Andorra, the little republic which has contrived to retain its separate life ever since the armies of Charlemagne swept through it to do battle with the paynim Moors.

But it was long before I really came to know anything of the country, of its history, its associations, of the character of its people. Even now I feel rather a stranger in the land. But what I do know and feel about this country is to be found within the covers of this book, set out for the con-

sideration of the reader, whether he chooses to learn all about it at his comfortable fireside at home, or prefers, as I advise him to do, to go forth and see it for himself.

As to formal acknowledgments, I take this opportunity of thanking Commandant Felix Albar of Perpignan for his kindly help upon many occasions; M. Casimir Soullier and M. Paul Testory for the valuable photographs they have placed at my disposal; and Mr. Norman Hutchinson, of the American Diplomatic Service; and Sir Henry Maxwell Lyte, for some of the most delightful pictures of Andorra and Vernet which appear in this book. To my dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Dunbar Jewett, I am indebted for many happy memories of Castell' Nou, to which reference is so often made in these pages.

I have also to thank Mr. Rudyard Kipling for kindly permitting me to quote from his letter to M. George Auriol of Perpignan his own vivid impressions of the Canigou, which to many readers will seem the most interesting thing in this unworthy volume.

As to those who have written on this country before me, I need only acknowledge any serious obligations to M. Gazanyola's *Histoire du Roussillon;* for while I have read in many volumes, and have even travelled with some in my pocket, like Pierre Vidal's indispensable *Guide*, and the *Pyrénées Inconnues* of Emmanuel Brousse, able and distinguished representative of the Pyr-Or in the French Parliament, my own book has been written for the most part, not in libraries, but by the wayside; now in a hayfield upon a summer afternoon in Andorra; now under the awnings of some old Catalan inn, while the beautiful girls with their swaying figures and dark eyes, and the jolly young fellows, have been passing before me; and anon, while the coach has stopped and the *cochero* has stepped down from his high seat for a gulp of Spanish wine. Oftener still, to the sound of running waters in the quiet shelter of Vernet Park. So that if it has any merit at all, it has this: that it tells of things seen and felt, and of folk one has come upon in the day's journeying, and of the incidents thereof; not forgetting some of those

who in the dim past, like Hannibal and Philip the Hardy and Muntaner, and the unhappy Abu-Neza-al-Shemi, who lies buried, they say, at Planés, marched and fought, and galloped and died upon these same highways of an old country.

And lastly, not to deceive the reader, though this is a book about a mountain country, it is not a mountaineering book. That has been done by others like Mr. Hillaire Belloc, who have been better able to do the theme justice. It is true that, as a member of the Alpine Club of France, I did once climb to the summit of the Canigou in delectable company; but my tastes have of late perforce followed a lowlier inclination, and for the rest I would say with old Virgil:

> "Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus
> Amnes flumina amem silvasque inglorius."

V. C. Scott O'Connor.

United Service Club, Simla.

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TRAVELS IN THE PYRENEES

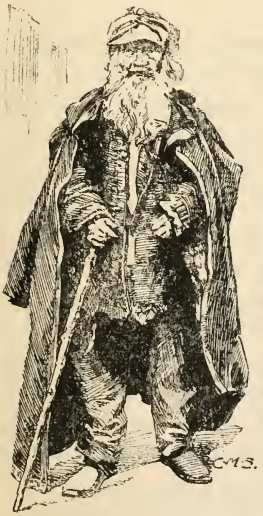
BOOK I

INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

I. The Pyrénées-Orientales



A BEGGAR

The Pyrenees run from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Racially they are not a dividing wall; for the Catalans at one end, the Basques at the other, lie astride upon both their flanks, dividing their allegiance between Paris and Madrid. Nor are these one people. The Catalan in his origins, in his language, in his type of body and mind, is a world apart from the Basque. Climatically, also, there is no similarity between the eastern and the western extremities of the chain. The moist Atlantic and the dry Mediterranean air each have their specific influence on the mountains that are nearest to their shores.

In this book I am concerned only with the eastern section, the home of the Catalan people, and rather more especially with that portion of it upon which the French, with their customary vanity, have bestowed the inclusive title of Les

Pyrénées-Orientales. But the French do not by any means hold the whole of the Eastern Pyrenees. In the very heart of this territory lies the ancient commonwealth of Andorra, which has dexterously preserved its existence for a thousand years, by dividing its allegiance between France and Spain. The beautiful Vale of the Cerdagne is shared by these Great Powers, though one in its perfection to the observer's eye; while upon the southern slopes lie some of the most prosperous of those Spanish communities whose pride is the city of Barcelona. I have thought it well, therefore, to include in this volume Andorra and the Spanish districts, and even to travel a little way down through the Pyrenean valley of the Aude as far as Carcassonne in Languedoc.

In these lands in which four languages are now spoken, and three Governments hold sway, there is nevertheless a profound unity, as the reader will see, derived from race and neighbourhood and history, and their intimate communion in the past.

The French department of the Pyrénées-Orientales, small as it is, compact as it is of one people, yet has distinctions and divisions of its own, which bear upon them politically the stamp of a thousand years, and physically are as old as the Pyrenees themselves. It is as well, if one is to understand a country, to live in it, to travel in it, to grasp these distinctions; for what is true of a sheltered valley like Vernet, wrapt in balmy and soothing airs, fails in its application to the open wind-swept plain; and the heat of a summer day at Elne with the Mediterranean glowing at its feet, is a different thing to the heavy shade of the ice-cold Canigou. The fisherman flinging his sail to the breeze at Collioure; the bourgeois in his drab counting-house at Perpignan; the shepherd fluting to his Pan amidst the solitudes of the Col de Jou—each of these would have a different tale to tell.

Briefly, then, the "Département" consists of three river valleys—those of the Tech, the Tet, and the Agly, or the Eagle—which run down like the three middle fingers of one's hand from the mountains to the sea. At their lofty extremities lie the highland districts of Capcir and the Cerdagne, which feed from their farther slopes the Spanish Segre and

the Aude of Languedoc. Up in the mountain land there are great peaks like the Carlitte, which rise to over 9,000 feet and stand amongst the Giants of the Pyrenees; but their glory is dimmed by the splendour of the Canigou, which stands apart and alone, the presiding divinity, the very soul of Roussillon. It owes its superb appearance to the material fact that it stands away from the great axis of the Pyrenees, thrust out, as it were alone, into the level plain. But to the eyes of the peasant, toiling amidst his olives and his vines, to the gaze of the mariner far out at sea, it is the very front of Jove himself. Even to the Catalan, immersed as he is in trade and the material enjoyment of life, it is a fount of inspiration and joy; but had Perpignan been Athens, or even had the old-world colony of Greeks survived and prospered along its level shores, it must have become a spiritual possession of the human race; so beautiful is it and so greatly does it rise above the world at its feet.

Jacinto Verdaguer, the poet of the Catalans, whose masterpiece "Lo Canigou" everyone should read, compares the three rivers of which the department is composed to the chords of a harp flung down at the threshold of the Canigou. The central string is made by the Tet, whose valley expands into the wide plain known as the Roussillon; its southern one by the Tech, which runs between the main line of the Pyrenees, here known as the Albères, and the foot-hill bulwarks of the Canigou; and its Northern one by the Agly, which runs for but a part of its course through the department, and is separated from the Valley of the Tet by the wild rough highlands known as the Corbières. The upper half of the Valley of the Tet is known as the Conflent—the land of Meeting Waters. It takes in the smiling and prosperous Vale of Prades, the deep and narrow gorges that enclose Villefranche and Olette as far as Mont Louis, and many of those lateral streams and valleys, such as that of Vernet, which provide the most perfect of its climates, and were chosen of old by the Benedictines for two out of the three of their royal abbeys in French Catalonia. Its limit towards the sea is the Col de Ternère, which yields a charming and comprehensive view of the widening plain, the blue sea in the distance, the surrounding hills, and the thriving

villages and towns of Roussillon. Here upon the plain lies the capital city of Perpignan, the strong fortress on the marches of France and Spain, and the heir of ancient Ruscino, which for 400 years was a Roman colony.

The Valley of the Tech bears the melodious name of Vallespir. Its upper portion, a mountain land, climbs up the southern flanks of the Canigou to Prats de Mollo and the Col of Ares, over which Spanish guns and armies have crossed in time of war. But its great door into Spain has lain from time immemorial over the Albères at the point known as the Col de Perthus. Here the great national highway from the one country into the other has passed for centuries; and in the judgment of many it was here that Hannibal crossed on his marvellous way to Rome, that Pompey raised his trophies, and Cæsar placed his altar to the Immortal Gods. In High Vallespir are reckoned the towns of Ceret, with its great bridge; of Arles, with its ruins of an ancient Benedictine abbey; and of Amélie-les-Bains, the military sanatorium of the South. Lower Vallespir is a narrow plain, widening towards the sea, and best seen in its entirety from the ruins of the château of La Rocca, where an old dolmen still bears the name of the Balma del Moro, the seat of the conquering Moor. It includes the towns of Argelès, and Le Boulou, "the Vichy of the Midi," and such exquisite harbours as Banyuls-sur-Mer; Collioure, loved of painters; and Port Vendres, where the Greek trader dropped his sails, and an altar of Venus rose in the days of Augustus Cæsar. But its greatest possession is the faded old city of Elne, named after the mother of Constantine, and adorned with marble cloisters and a stately old cathedral, which still retain memories of its wonderful past.

The Vale of the Agly, or the Eagle, though known as the Fenouillet, is part of Roussillon. It includes the town of Rivesaltes, famed for its rich wines; the deep and shadowy gorges of Galamus and St. Pol; and the frontier fortress of Salses, which has for ages barred the way from Narbonne. But only its lower half is strictly Catalan; and its upper portion, where the *langue d'oc* is still spoken, was not added till after the Treaty of the Pyrenees in the days of Louis Quatorze.

Of the mountain districts, which with these three valleys make up the Pyrénées-Orientales, THE CERDAGNE is the most notable; for though it is lifted up here at a great height above the seaboard, it consists in the main of a smiling and beautiful valley, watered by the Segre, an affluent of the Ebro, and is of exceptional charm. Its French capital is Mont Louis, and there is a string of French villages along its course, ending on the Spanish border at Puigcerda. One enters the Cerdagne at the Col de la Perche, that open and sunlit pass which comes so pleasantly in summer upon the traveller making his way up the defiles of the Tet, but which has long been the terror of the winter traveller, so swept is it then by the winds of heaven, and so deep and engulfing is the snow which lies upon it. One leaves it under the mighty walls of the Sierra del Cadi, one of the noblest of the Pyrenean mountains. Half of the Cerdagne belongs to France, the other half to Spain. But its people are one, and in their estimation there is no country in the world like the Cerdagne.

"Meytat de Francia
Meytat d'España
Niha ho altra terra
Com La Cerdaña."

Halfway down it is the narrow lateral valley of Carol, the highway into Foix and Toulouse. It borders upon Spain and Andorra, and is a cold and bitter land in winter, with a distinct character and entity of its own. Its people will tell you that it bears the name of Charlemagne, who marched through it on his way to the conquest of the Spanish Moors; and it has from time immemorial been one of the great doors of entry from France into Spain. Its origin is very similar to that of the Andorran republic, and it maintained for centuries a local independence of its own.

The Capcir is the least known of all the districts of the Pyrénées-Orientales. It is a little mountain land cut off from the outer world, and buried under snow for the greater part of the year; but in summer its meadows are enamelled with flowers, its streams are full of pure and limpid waters, and its dark fir-woods are heavy with an impenetrable shade and resonant with the music of cattle bells. It opens into the Cerdagne through the beautiful valley of the

Quillane. Here in this remote territory rise the infant waters of the Aude, which, rushing through the mountain gorges through scenery of great beauty, attain to fame and tranquillity under the historic walls of Carcassonne.

To these time-honoured and recognized divisions should be added, for the better comprehension of this country, the Canigou, for it is neither a valley nor a plain. It is a world in itself, and, like Etna and Vesuvius, it springs straight up into heaven from the level sea, dominating alike the lives and the imaginations of all who live within its circuit.

These are the main divisions of the Pyrénées-Orientales: but the reader who will turn to a map of the country will observe that for some thirty miles it shares in the glorious heritage of the Mediterranean. The coast runs in almost a perfectly straight line from Cape Leucate to Collioure, and it is only at its far southern end, where the Pyrenees under the local name of the Albères descend to the water's edge, that it assumes its traditional and exquisite beauty. All that lies between is a low country of marshes and salt-lakes and river-estuaries—a country that has been wrested from the sea only within comparatively recent times. Once the whole of this coastline was beautifully indented with the blue waters, and the rich plain of the Roussillon had not yet come into being. But the Tet and the Tech and the Agly did their work, bringing down the mountains to the sea, and laying out the new lands for the future habitation of men. This great process of disintegration and rebirth, which from the earliest times and in its endless manifestations has touched the imaginations of men, giving a colour to all our beliefs and hopes, still visibly continues here. The waters in their flood season bring down immense quantities of soil to the sea's edge; the sea, driven by the same winds that carry the rain, fling them back, and in the shock of their conflict they form the marshes which characterize this coast. Salses and St. Nazaire are cases in point, and far inland there are old marshes whose names alone survive, while there are others which have even within living memory yielded to the plough. The cities of the plain, like Elne and Ruscino, which were once washed by the sea, now stand high and dry, and it is only at Port Vendres, where the Pyrenees confront the waters, that ships can anchor, as of old.

II. Andorra

A MULE-CART

Andorra is one of the smallest countries in the world. Like Monaco and Liechtenstein and San Marino, it is a chance survival from the past; and its political institutions, its perpetuation of mediæval forms of government, lend it a lively interest that far exceeds its merely physical attraction. Yet even this little territory can boast of beautiful and imposing scenes. Its high mountains, which rise to 9,000 feet above sea-level, present a superb display of dark blue wall and snow-spangled summits to the eye of the Spanish traveller who sees them for the first time from the vantage-point of the Col de Tosas; and the more intimate view that expands from the lofty Col of the Emballira, on the edge of France, sustains this distant impression. There—are the glittering peaks; and at foot, far below in the green secluded valleys, are the hamlets and the pasture-lands of Andorra. So steep and sheer are these mountains, so humble the tenements that lie at their feet, that one might suppose these were colonies of slaves kept by the mountain kings for their own use and service. And in a sense this is true; for, while the pride and the wilfulness of man have made him rise up from his lowly valleys and claim even the everlasting hills as his own, they remain the dominant factor in his life.

Andorra, then, is a mountain land, lodged in the very heart of the Pyrenees. It lies upon their southern slope, facing the Spanish Peninsula, and feeding from its snowy heights the waters of the Ebro and the blue waves of the Mediterranean. It consists of the twin valleys of the Valira

del Norte and the Valira del Oriente, which, falling swiftly from an altitude of 7,500 feet, unite, and flow together into the Segre at the episcopal city of Urgell. It is customary to speak of the Republic of Andorra, but the designation is unknown to its people. The Neutral Valleys, or simply Los Valles, is their own name for the land which has come down to them from their forefathers. These valleys with their mountains cover an area of some 450 kilometres—25 from north to south, and 30 from east to west—and sustain but partially a population of 5,210 inhabitants, who live in forty-four hamlets and villages. These are grouped into six parishes (for the old ecclesiastical divisions have not been changed, as across the border, into communes), of which Ordino and La Massane lie along the Northern Valira, Canillo and Encamp along the eastern river, and Andorra la Vieja, the capital, at their junction. Lower down on the valley road to Spain is San Julia de Loria, the most southern parish of Andorra.

The natural approach to the country is up the united Valira from Spain, and it is upon this highway that the life of the people has moved from time immemorial. But political causes have given a special prominence to the far more difficult route from France over the Col of the Emballira, or Fray Miguel, which rises cold and forbidding to a height of 7,500 feet. Thus, while the sunny front door of Andorra has always been open to Spain, the Frenchman has had to climb in through a little window in the attic. So great has been his agility, however, so assiduous his devotion, that he has succeeded in making a considerable impression on the Andorran heart, and even bids fair to emerge as the triumphant wooer.

He has been favoured by one great circumstance, and it is this, that his attic window looks out upon one of Nature's highways, the Trans-Pyrenean road from Ax and Toulouse into Spain. This road he has perfected, while his indolent rival has slept. It is now being traversed by a railway of international importance, and when it is completed, Andorra, from being one of the most secluded territories in Europe, will stand upon the edge of a world thoroughfare, within a night's journey from the City of Light. It is true that there

THE FORT AT SALSES (*page* 24)

THE CARLITTE FROM THE CERDAGNE (*page* 23)

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will still remain that cold and snow-swept Col of the Emballira between France and Andorra, that the southern sun will still glow upon the advances of Spain; but what can be further done to improve his own connection the brisk Frenchman, we may be sure, will accomplish. Already he has built a driving-road from the railway junction to near the summit of the Col. He has persuaded the timid and hesitating Andorran to carry this road over the Col into the valleys beyond. He has lavished his gifts in the form of French schools, a telegraph line, a free postal service, and free entry into France for the Andorran herds. Such blandishments are bound to prevail. "*L'Andorre s'oriènte manifestement vers la France*" is the triumphant cry of the French admirer.

On the other hand, there are deep underlying influences at work: profound affinities of race, of language, of religion; Catalan and Andorran are one in speech and origin; and while Andorra remains a devout daughter of the Church, the Frenchman has become an unbeliever. This pull of opposite forces is as amusing in its details as it is interesting from more spacious points of view. Nowhere can one study to better purpose the rival temperaments of France and Spain; and it is to this rivalry that Andorra owes her independence.

As to the beginnings of the Andorran Republic no one is quite certain. In its earliest days it was like any other mountain valley, cut off from its neighbours, inaccessible, local, a natural republic. It has by dint of a remarkable series of facts retained what so many other little mountain valleys have lost—its political independence. It is thus a survival, not only from the feudal period, but from primitive times, when chivalry and its usages were yet undreamt of. Its legend tells how, when Christendom arose to expel the intruding hosts of Islam, Louis the Debonair, with the help of Don Marc Almugavar, chief of the light infantry of Andorra, forced the Eastern Pyrenean passes, and drove the Saracens before him into Spain. Charlemagne, to recompense these Catalan mountaineers, gave them what they have always loved most in the world—the right to govern themselves. There is even a charter to this effect on vellum, with the

signatures of Carolus Magnus, and Louis, and other great personages, which one can see in the episcopal archives at Urgell. M. de Brutails has brought all the weight of his heavy artillery of scholarship to bear upon this romantic document, and has rejected with scorn its pretension to validity.

But no one in Andorra doubts the truth of the story it tells. Andorra, in the belief of its people, was founded by Charlemagne, and it is beyond doubt that the Carolingians were its Sovereign Lords. Their rights or powers passed to the Counts of Urgell, who shared them with their kinsmen, the Bishops of that diocese. Church and State were closely intermingled in those days, and men of the same blood ruled in both. But little by little the secular authority passed from one family to another—from Urgell to Castelbon, from Castelbon to Foix—while the Church remained immutable at Urgell, her continuity unbroken. Bishops and Counts disputed interminably about their respective rights, until in 1278 matters came to such a point that a final settlement became imperative. Peter of Urgell, the Bishop, and Roger Bernard III., Count of Foix, appointed a committee of arbitration consisting of the Bishop of Valencia, a Canon of Narbonne, and four noble chevaliers. Their decision was given in the famous *Paréages* which still define the rights of the two protecting Powers under whose shadow Andorra exists. But even in Andorra the world has moved forward a long way since 1278, and large portions of the *Paréages* are now obsolete.

The rights of the Counts of Foix passed to the Kings of Navarre. Henri Quatre added them to those of the French Crown, through which they have descended through all the strange vicissitudes of government in France to the present republic. For a short period during the Revolution, France lost her hold over Andorra, the Doctrinaires of that period refusing to have anything to do with a feudal right. But the Andorrans were terrified at the prospect of being swallowed by a single Lord, and persisted in offering their annual tribute of 960 francs to France. In 1806 they were gratified by the great Napoleon, who resumed the rights of the French Crown.

The Bishops, while at times they have welcomed the partnership of France, have at others tried hard to establish their sole ascendancy. The present situation is satisfactory to neither. It galls the French pride for its Government to be placed upon equal terms with a provincial Bishop, and the infidelity of France is anathema to the Roman Church. The terms of their co-partnership, moreover, are vague and fruitful in possibilities of discord. It is a singular and ill-matched union; but it suits the Andorrans, who have learnt that in these opposing forces lies their safety. "Divide and Exist" is their motto.

The internal government of the country is regulated by a Parliament or Council of twenty-four members, of whom four represent each parish. They bear the title of "Illustrious," and are presided over by a Syndic-Procureur-General elected by themselves. The revenues of the State provide a salary of 24 pesetas (under a pound) a year for the Syndic, and of 10 pesetas, or less than 8 shillings a year, for each of the Illustrious Councillors. The government of each parish is vested in two Consuls, and twelve Councillors who bear the prefix of "Honourable." The electorate is patriarchal, only the head of each household having the right to vote. Each house owns a rifle, and each householder is to this extent liable to military service in the defence of his country. By a curious survival of feudal usages, the Viguier of France is Commander-in-Chief of the Andorran Militia. The foreign affairs of Andorra are regulated by its Over-Lords; its laws are administered by Judges appointed by them both. There are two Viguiers appointed by the Bishop and the President of the French Republic respectively. Either of these can dispose of petty criminal cases, but both form a bench for the trial of graver issues. Civil suits are disposed of by an Andorran official appointed alternately by the Viguiers, on the recommendation of the Council-General. Appeals from the judgment of this Solon are carried before a Judge, who is appointed for life, in rotation, by the Bishop and the French Republic. A last resort may be made either to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal at Urgell or the *Tribunal Supérieur d'Andorre* established at Perpignan.

The money of Andorra is Spanish; its post is carried free. For foreign letters either French or Spanish stamps can be affixed at the discretion of the sender.

The judicious reader will observe that the government of Andorra provides admirable material for a comic opera; but to the Andorran every detail of the complex government under which he exists is of surpassing solemnity and importance. Under the smock of every peasant and muleteer in Andorra there beats the heart of a man who is a patriot, a lawyer, and an international diplomatist, in one. Life need not be dull under such auspices. And this is well, for there are long months of winter when the valleys are all but sealed to the outer world, and the good earth is white with its coverlet of snow; there is toil severe and urgent during the summer months; there is a great loneliness in the high pasture-lands upon the mountains, amidst the little patches of corn won from the hard and almost inaccessible rocks. There is poverty such that, while none are reduced to the utter desolation and despair of our great cities, few have wealth, and most are hard put to it to make ends meet.

The future of Andorra offers fascinating material for conjecture. One thing is certain, that it cannot much longer maintain its isolation or its rudimentary and primitive condition. Its magnificent water-power is a source of potential wealth. Its granite is capable of exploitation. Its mountain haunts are as beautiful in their way as those of Switzerland, and are sure to attract the tourist. While upon the edge of the Emballira, where France and Andorra meet, within an hour's ride by motor of an international railway, within a night's journey from Paris, the sharp eye of the speculator has already fastened as the seat of a gambling hell. But here the co-Princes intervene, and without the joint concurrence of France and the Bishop the peasantry cannot sign away their heritage.

To their credit it must be said that they would be loth to do so; for if Monaco has been the Magdalene who has fared sumptuously abroad, Andorra may well claim to have been the good and humble daughter who has stayed virtuously at home. But the hour of her temptation has come.

CASTILIAN DANCING, OLD STYLE

CASTILIAN DANCING IN THE OPEN AIR (*page* 67)

III. The Spanish Districts

DRINKING FROM THE "PORRO"

Of the Spanish districts to which reference is made in this book I have no need to write at such length as I shall do in the case of the Pyrénées-Orientales. Their history is in its broad outlines the history of the French department; like it, they were peopled unnumbered centuries ago by an Iberian race, though less mingled, perhaps, with Celtic blood. To their sea-border came the Tyrian and the Greek; the Roman, the Visigoth, and the Saracen. To them, as to their neighbours, the avenging armies of Charlemagne brought freedom from Islam, and amidst them were laid at the same time the foundations of existing society. Until the Treaty of the Pyrenees was made, and Louis Quatorze pompously observed that the Pyrenees had ceased to exist, they formed one people, subject to one Crown. Yet the fact that they lay upon opposite sides of the Pyrenean wall always had made a difference between them, even as far down as the sea's edge, where the haughty mountains dwindle to a tithe of their true proportions; and this difference has been accentuated by the passing of the Roussillon to France. Two hundred and fifty years of French administration have sensibly widened the gulf between these kindred peoples. Perhaps the division between them has gone now as far as it is ever likely to go, and with the completion of the Trans-Pyrenean Railway from Ax to Ripoll the boast of Louis Quatorze may at last be fulfilled.

These Spanish districts of the Mediterranean Pyrenees consist of the far valleys of the two Nogueras and of the Segre, whose waters yield their quota to the Ebro halfway between Saragossa and the sea; of the Valley of the Llobregat, which descends from the southern slopes of the majestic Sierra del Cadi, through the land of Baga past Manresa and Monserrat to Barcelona; and of the Valley of

the Ter, whose ice-cold waters, fed by the snows of the Puig Mal, run past the little mountain town of San Juan de las Abadessas to Ripoll's famous abbey, and, washing the heroic walls of Gerona, fall into the Mediterranean south of Rosas Bay.

The whole of this country lies upon the southern slope of the Pyrenees, and it is drier and more fiercely lighted by the sun than any other part of the Pyrenean chain. Amidst the mountains it is wilder and less accessible than the corresponding districts in the French department, and displays even here in progressive Catalonia, within sight of the proud city of Barcelona, the inherent inefficiency of Spanish rule.

Upon its seacoast, where the mountains run down to the Mediterranean, there are numberless little bays and sheltered harbours, with their villages and towns clustering about the blue water; and at Rosas Bay there is space for the battle fleets of Europe. Here upon the shores of this magnificent water the Greeks of Massilia founded, at the very dawn of history, the city of Empurias, which for centuries stood out for Hellenic arts and civilization, to fall at last before the conquering might of Rome. But as a city Empurias continued to flourish till Saracen and Norman came and reduced it to utter desolation. Its name has survived, and throughout the feudal period it gave a proud title to one of the most powerful of the Gothic Counts, whose territories extended from here across the Pyrenees to the Roussillon. Hard by it is the old Spanish town of Figueras, which has so often been taken and retaken in the wars of the adjoining peoples that it is declared by its philosophical inhabitants to belong in time of peace to Spain, but in time of war to France. Near it is Perelada of Muntaner, where the glorious old Chronicler was born, and where, as he tells one in his immortal pages, his father was honoured by the presence of the King of Aragon under his roof.

This country is so crowded with historic and romantic interest that it would require a book to itself. Here I pretend to do no more than to give the reader a glimpse into its life and character, taking him past Gerona and Barcelona up the Valley of the Ter to Ripoll, and over the

intervening mountains into the lovely Valley of the Cerdagne, where the Segre flows and the Sierra del Cadi lifts its noble front, one of the most stately mountains in the world.

CHAPTER II

THREE THOUSAND YEARS IN A FRENCH DEPARTMENT

"Mais si demain nous entreprenions une course à travers le monde pour retrouver la patrie chère à notre cœur, si des forêts des bords du Rhin, nous allions, à travers la Campanie ou l'Estramadure, vers les plaines brûlées de soleil où les Maures vivent dans des palais de légendes et d'or, nous n'arrêterions nulle part notre désir insatisfait, et c'est ici où elles se retrouvent toutes, que nous reviendrions aimer, en une seule, nos multiples patries!"

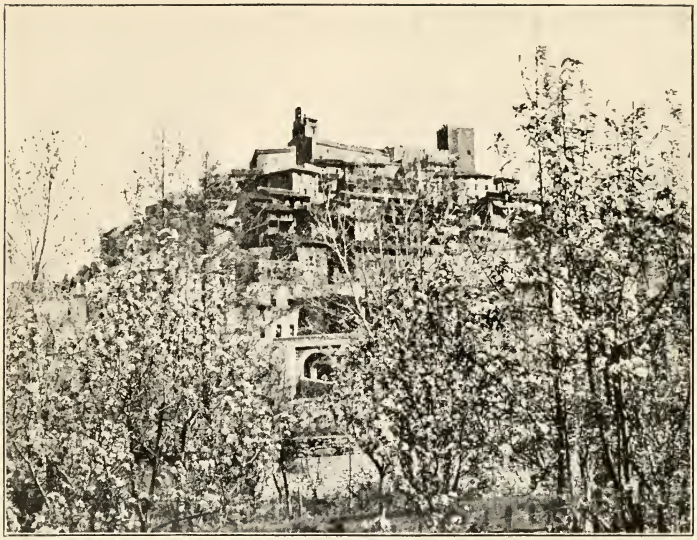
I. The March of Hannibal

AN ANCIENT WATCH-TOWER

One can no more understand a people without knowing something of their past than one can appreciate a country without some knowledge of its structure. The history of the Pyrénées-Orientales is the history of Roussillon, and it is a moving tale, full of interest even for those who are indolent and indisposed to effort. In telling it one might travel far back into the misty years of its dawn, and people it with those cave-men and makers of stone implements who even in lands that are still wrapped in a primitive civilization are spoken of as infinitely remote. One might amuse one's self, like the story-tellers, with episodes in their conflicts with the sabre-toothed tiger, and picture their marshes inhabited by the rhinoceros, their forests crashing to the ponderous march of the mammoth. One might float in fancy upon the ice-cold waters of the Lake of the Cerdagne, and dream of the time when from the white summit of the Canigou

there rose its volcanic fires. We could do all this with a certain amount of conviction, for even that long-distant past has left its trace. But of recorded history there is practically none till that great and wonderful event transpired which is known as the March of Hannibal upon Rome. Then for the first time the eyes of the world were turned upon this little fraction of Europe, and the light shone upon its obscurity. That was 217 years before the birth of Christ. The people he found living there were already advanced some way on the road to civilization. They could boast of two walled cities; they had the courage to stand in his path and make terms with him, before he might pass on his conquering way; the skill to choose rightly between him and the Envoys of Rome, who had come to induce them to resist his progress. They had already that fine respect for their women which distinguishes European civilization from every other in the world, and the Mediterranean had already brought them into touch with the refining genius of the Greeks. Nearly 500 years earlier the Greeks had established themselves at Marseilles, at Empurias, and at Pyrene, "the rich city on the confines of the land of the Sordi, which is distant seven days sail from the Columns of Hercules." At Empurias in Spanish Catalonia the earth still yields memories of that romantic past, in Greek mosaics and alabaster vases of the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ; and at Elx, lower down the coast, there has been found a bust which offers us a marvellous portrait of the type of man who talked with Hannibal at Elne. What he was precisely by race it is difficult to say, for the world here was already old when Hannibal came. The Greek Scylax 300 years earlier called him from Empurias to the Rhone, a mixture of the Iberian and the Ligurian; and in later years he was known as a Celt of the Confederation of the Volces-Tectosages, who descended from their northern homes to mingle their blood with that of these Mediterranean people.

From the walls of Ruscino Hannibal passed with his army along that narrow road which still carries the traveller past the Lake of Salses, and with him went the interest of the on-looking world. We know how he fought



PEAR BLOOM AT VERNET (*page* 73)

VERNET IN FEBRUARY (*page* 73)

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those wondrous battles of his in Italy, shaking the very foundations upon which all our modern civilization rests; and we know how he died, conferring immortality by his mere presence upon the obscure princeling whose hospitality he had sought. But of the history of the people he left behind him here in the summer of 217 B.C. nothing more is known with precision for a hundred years, till the Romans advanced upon them from Narbonne.

II. The Roman Sway

IN A CATALAN VILLAGE

The Romans were scarcely established, when there swept down upon this country the hosts of the Cymbri and the Teutons, on their route to Spain. The old city of Illiberis (now Elne), which had sheltered Hannibal, is thought to have been destroyed during this invasion and in its returning wave, as the Cymbri were driven back from Spain. For, some years later, Pliny was to speak of it as the poor remnant of a city once great:

"Magnæ quondam urbis tenue vestigium."

We come now to the period of the civil wars which distracted Rome, till the Empire was established under Augustus; and here upon this highway of the Empire some part of the great drama was played out. Here is Sertorius hastening with a handful of men to Spain, to build himself up there an army to resist the might of Sylla. And here across this narrow stage, along roads and up mountain passes which remain unchanged, we can follow, as it were, with one glance of the eye the march of the contending forces: the three legions and 2,500 cavalry of Metellus Pius; the troops of Sertorius alternately beaten and

victorious; the advance of Pompey, and the erection of his vainglorious trophies on a summit of the Pyrenees. "From the Alps to the confines of ultimate Spain, I, Pompey, have conquered in arms 846 cities." We can see one greater than he come by, one of the four great Victors of the world, pausing in his swift journey (he travelled from Rome to Cordova, 1,728 Roman miles, in twenty-seven days) to cause a simple altar to be raised beside these vaunting words. We can even picture him as he passes, varying the tedium of the way by describing it in verse, which might have immortalized Roussillon had it survived. But no eloquence can tell us more than this when we cross from Salses into Spain, that Hannibal and Cæsar have passed this way.

Augustus Cæsar, travelling in a more leisurely fashion from Narbonne twenty-nine years before Christ, brought with him the dignity as well as the military power of Rome. The rights of Latium were conferred upon its people, and Roman colonies established at Ruscino (forerunner of Perpignan), and at Llivia, which 1,700 years later was to escape annexation to France by a quibble based upon this great beginning. At Port Vendres a temple was raised to the goddess Venus, from whom Augustus claimed descent.

The Roman peace now slowly settled upon the land, the Roman civilization grew amongst its people, the Roman legionary marched along its great highways from Italy to Spain, and up the mountain road to Llivia. The arts, the sciences, and the opinions of the capital, were rapidly assimilated here, the Latin tongue was spoken, and the Roman gods overshadowed the land till the most potent of all the changes that have swept over this country came silently and almost without any chronicle in the form of Christianity.

During the reign of the Emperor Constantine (A.D. 306), the old city of Illiberis, which had fallen to waste, took a new lease of life under the name of his British mother, the Empress Helena, which it still bears after the lapse of 1,600 years; and in A.D. 350 his son Constantius, flying before Magnentius into Spain, along the great highway which here offered him the swiftest passage, was overtaken at Elne, and dragged

out to his death from the church in which he had taken refuge, by Gaisson the Gaul.

In 409 Roussillon shared in the approaching downfall of the Western Empire, and the Vandals, the Alans, and the Suevi, thronged its highways on their march to Spain. Driven back from the Pyrenees, they still had Roussillon at their mercy, and probably destroyed all that remained of the Roman colony of Ruscino. The civil wars of Honorius and Constantine, of Gerontius and Constantius and Jovin, sent armies across the Roussillon, like a weaver's shuttle, until Atulph, King of the Visigoths, took Narbonne in 413, and, having married his captive Placidia, sister of the Emperor Honorius, with great pomp and Roman observance, marched on to his death at Barcelona in 415. At length, after bloody battles and sieges, and heroic efforts of the Romans under Littorius to keep back the final tide, Roussillon with Narbonne passed to the Visigoths under Theodoric II. The Roman dominion was ended, after a long duration of nearly 600 years—four times as long as we reckon our own existing supremacy in India. But Rome left behind her undying memories. Her language still persists in the Catalan, which is spoken alike throughout the Pyrénées-Orientales, in the far secluded valleys of Andorra, and in the roaring streets of Barcelona, the Manchester of Spain. Her religion, her civilization, her institutions—these prevailed. But the Goth brought his own conception of the law, and imposed it upon the conquered people. Of material remains of the Roman period there are singularly few. Roussillon, we may suppose, was of more value to them as a highway than as of intrinsic worth; and as a highway it was exposed to the ravages of succeeding hordes of barbarians. A few coins, a very few inscriptions, an arch at the baths at Arles, some shattered fragments of the temple of Venus at Pyrene—these are, seemingly, all that survive of 600 years of material domination. Even the Great Roman Road upon which the history of the Roussillon was accomplished has all but disappeared, and its reconstruction is better accomplished to-day from the frail records of the pen than from the visible stone and mortar of the Roman workman.

III. The Visigoths

THE VINTAGE

We come now to the dominion of the Goths, heirs to all that Rome in her passing had left. A swift glance at it will take us over the 250 years that cover the interval from Theodoric II. to the coming of Al Haour. The Gothic Princes accepted the existing conditions of society: their Romanized subjects were more civilized than themselves; they had a common bond in their religion; and the Gothic military power could do more to protect its subjects from the incursions of fresh hordes of barbarians than Rome herself. Thus, the change that was now accomplished was endurable, and not necessarily for the worse.

But Christianity, with all her message of good-will, brought here, as elsewhere, not peace, but a sword. The Aryan Goths were soon embroiled with the Catholic Franks. Their King Alaric, grandson of Theodoric, was killed in battle at Vouillé by Clovis; and Carcassonne, their strong fortress, in which they had placed all the treasures of the Crown, was besieged. There followed a disputed succession. Narbonne was sacked by Gondebaud, the Burgundian King, but restored to the Visigoths by the forcible intervention of Theodoric the Great, King of the Eastern Goths. Roussillon became, as she has ever been throughout her history, a highway of the contending armies, until in 526 Amalric was acknowledged as King of the Visigoths of Septimania, with his capital at Narbonne. But his ill-treatment of his wife Clotilde, the sister of Childebert, King of the Franks, brought down upon him the wrath of that monarch, and woe upon his unhappy country. Narbonne was once more pillaged, and Roussillon ravaged by the Frankish invaders.

IN A CATALAN VILLAGE (*page* 34)

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The capital of the Visigoths was in consequence moved across the Pyrenees, and Roussillon, with Narbonne, was reduced to the status of a frontier province on the marches of France. So weak, however, was the central power that in 567 Liuva, the Governor, set himself up in rebellion, and was proclaimed its King. The Franks were finally driven back from Carcassonne, and the Visigoths were left masters of Septimania. In 589 they renounced their Aryan heresy, but not without dissension and violence amongst themselves. The Aryan Bishop Autalacus raised an outbreak at Narbonne, in the course of which numbers of the Catholic clergy were slain. His principal followers were eventually put to death, and he himself died of mortification.

The centre of the Visigothic power was now at far Toledo, and the monarchy became elective. In 672 Vamba was proclaimed King; but his lieutenants at Narbonne and in the Roussillon declared their independence, and the country was once more plunged into a state of civil war. Vamba advanced across the Pyrenees, driving the rebels before him from Collioure, L'Ecluse, Ultrera, and Llivia. On his return, having vanquished his enemies and brought them to heel, he halted two days at Elne, and sent his army into Spain in three detachments up the Valleys of the Tech and Tet, and along the old Roman Road. Of these events there survives a record, in the narrative of Julian, Archbishop of Toledo, who wrote of them as an eye-witness.

Between 687 and 694 Septimania was so harried by the Franks and the plague, that the King, Egitza, in proposing to the Seventh Council of Toledo a severe regulation against the Jews, excepted those of Septimania because of the taxes they paid, and of their industry, which was helping to revive the distracted country.

The Gothic monarchy now rapidly decayed. Disputed successions, encroachments by the nobles and the Church on the royal power, religious dissensions, the hatred of the Jews, and a widespread decay of morals and manners, prepared the way for the besom of the Saracen invasion.

Few visible traces remain of the Visigothic rule in the Eastern Pyrenees—the bridge at Ceret, perhaps, and the ruins of the châteaux at Ultrera and L'Ecluse. In Vernet Church

there is a pedestal of granite, roughly sculptured, which dates from the Visigothic period, anterior to the Saracens. But they left a profound and lasting impression through their laws. The Lex Gothorum was a compound of their own system with that of the Romans, and in the eighth century it regulated the lives of all the people of this country, who called themselves neither Romans nor Franks, but Goths. The Gothic blood remained, mingling with the darker blood of the South; and to this day in the village *place*, when the girls come out to dance, one may see the blonde Northern type intermingled with the sombre browns and velvet lashes which speak of the Iberian and of those who came with Al Haour from Africa.

IV. The Mohammedan Wave

OXEN PLOUGHING

The conquest of Spain by the Arabs, their advance upon France, and their defeat by Charles Martel at Tours, are episodes in the history of the world, and not merely in that of a minor department of France; but there is no overlooking them here, for the Roussillon lay for its sins in the path of the invaders, and upon this highway, narrowing here between the mountains and the sea, a necessary part of the tragedy was wrought.

In 711 the Arabs under Tarik, whose name survives to this day in Gibraltar, landed upon this edge of Europe with 12,000 men. Within six years—so feeble was Christendom, so fierce the onset of Islam—the new-comers had swept across the Pyrenees to Nîmes and Narbonne. What was a little tract of country, but thirty miles in length, from the Albères to the Lake of Salses, to such a host as this? They passed over it like the wind over a field of corn.

Returning within two years, the Moslem leader Al Haour —his very name, like the sound of a hurricane, must have filled these people with dread—carried back with him into Spain long strings of white-faced women and blue-eyed children to minister to the requirements of his race.

In 721 the Arabs returned under Al Samah, crossing once more the narrow stage of the Roussillon to the sack of Narbonne and the siege of Toulouse, where they were beaten and their leader killed by the Duke Eudes of Aquitaine. The whole country thereupon rose up against them; but in 724 they returned under Ambiza, and punished this revolt with fire and sword, slaughtering the men who stood in their path, and carrying off the women and children into captivity.

But the Arab also paid his toll. Ambiza in his turn was vanquished and killed by the Duke Eudes, and the invading horde drifted back to Spain, whence it returned with fresh horrors in 729. During these four intervening years there occurred that romantic episode of the love of Othman-abu-Neza-al-Shemi, which lingers to this day as a folk-tale of the countryside.

The Saracen wave was now nearly spent. In 732, driving on with terrific force over the whole of the Midi of France, engulfing the great cities of Bordeaux and Toulouse, it broke, and was shattered under the walls of Poitiers by Charles Martel. The great Emir Abder-Rahman was slain, and his followers were driven back to Narbonne.

The Battle of Tours was one of the great and decisive battles of the world, yet it brought no immediate solace to the Roussillon. Here the Arab was fated to remain master for another twenty-seven years—a generation; but he ruled over a desolate and wasted land. It was only in the mountains and in the remote places that the people were able to protract their existence, and but for such shelter few would have survived the cataclysm of the Arab invasions; for the country was too small, too absolutely in the pathway of the storm, to escape annihilation. The mountaineers alone held out, taking their toll of the stragglers and the rear-guards engaged in the defiles of the Pyrenees. In 756 they were grown strong enough to inflict a severe defeat upon an army

sent under Soleiman to chastise them, and at last, in 759, the Arab garrison of Narbonne being put to the sword, the Moslems withdrew into Spain.

Thus ended the Mohammedan occupation of the Eastern Pyrenees, leaving behind it nothing but destruction. Of the rich gifts they were to lavish upon Spain, of the civilization they were to introduce at a later period into that country, of the superb buildings in which their fame is gloriously enshrined, there is no trace or record here. They destroyed everything, they constructed nothing; yet the memory of their passing lives to-day as does the memory of none of those who went before them. The Peace of Rome, which lay upon the land for 500 years, is forgotten; the terror of forty years is kept in vivid remembrance. The Saracen's Bridge, the Saracen's Seat—these are names not uncommon on the countryside. The beacon towers on the summits of the Albères, where they decline towards the sea, still bear the Arab name of Talayot, from the verb "to make known, to communicate." The folk-tales of the peasantry include more than one that relate to the Saracen and the Moor, and the Catalan epic of "The Canigou" finds its inspiration in this period. Every peasant in the country knows that his forefathers lay under the heel of the Moslem; and there is even mention of title-deeds which tell of one who held land here in the days of the Caliph Omar II., when he ruled as Governor of Narbonne.

There is one pre-eminent reason for the abiding recollection of the Mussulman that pervades the country. "The Saracen Period" stands for the conflict of two widely divergent civilizations, for the epic contest of Christianity with Islam. Men prefer to think of their victories rather than of their defeats; and though the Mussulman humbled the ancestors of the Catalans to dust, he was beaten in the end. The Pyrenees became a great outpost of Christendom, and across them, as from the sallying port of a fortress, advanced the avenging armies of Charlemagne. No subsequent vicissitude—and there have been many—has affected the permanence and continuity of this change in the history of the land. It was sudden and swift and splendid, and not like the slow passing of Rome, and its memory will last as long as Christianity survives as the religion of this people.

BASQUES catalan

THE VINTAGE

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V. The Counts of Catalonia

THE VINTAGE

The reign of Charlemagne, then, marks the foundations upon which existing society in the Pyréneés-Orientales is laid. Many, if not all, of the little towns which bear Saints' names date from this period. The land was re-peopled by the Goths whom the Moslem possession drove north out of Spain, the feudal lord came into existence, and the Church sheltered the reviving hamlets under her wing. Notwithstanding a fresh invasion under Abdullah-ben-Abdul-Melech, who in 792 took Gerona by storm and marched across the Pyrenees, the Christian advance was continued, and at the death of Charlemagne the whole of Catalonia to Barcelona was reconquered, and made a province of France. Thus was the Roussillon reclaimed to Christendom; but long years were to pass before its people were to be finally rid of the Mussulman as a troublesome neighbour. In 828 a fresh and devastating invasion had to be faced, and as late as 1140 Udalgar, Bishop of Elne, appeared before the Synod of Narbonne to ask for charity towards his distressed people. The land, he said, was ravaged by the Balearic Moors, who in their last raid had taken great numbers captive, and demanded a hundred young virgins as ransom. The Synod granted special indulgences to all who might be willing to come forward in the good cause of rescuing these captives.

To the Moors were superadded the Northmen, who in 859 sacked the old city of Elne, burnt and pillaged the Monastery of Arles-sur-Tech, and carried off whatever they could lay their hands upon. Thus the sea-border of Roussillon, which brought it civilization and wealth, was a two-edged sword, fraught also with invasion and woe.

Yet withal, this period of 400 years, which extends from the advance of Charlemagne to the incorporation of the Pyrénées-Orientales in the sovereignty of Aragon in 1172, was one of progressive advance, and, though its history has often been punctuated with disaster, the country has never since the days of Charlemagne been overwhelmed by any of the cataclysms of previous ages.

Throughout this period the whole of Catalonia was governed by Counts, who gradually became hereditary, and more powerful as the authority of the Carolingians waned and the political centre moved from Paris to Barcelona. These were the Counts of whom the present-day traveller so often hears mentioned in connection with the monuments and the local history of the land—the Counts of the Cerdagne and the Conflent; of Ampurias and Pierrelate and Roussillon; of Besalu and Fenouillet and Vallespir.

They were a picturesque and a remarkable race, and, though they quarrelled violently amongst themselves and were perpetually at war, they undoubtedly helped in the regeneration of their country. Men tainted with all the vices of the Middle Ages, they were redeemed by many chivalrous qualities—by valour, and self-sacrifice, and generosity; and above all, perhaps, by the great mediæval virtues of repentance and restitution, to which so many of their surviving testaments bear witness.

In the exercise of their prerogatives, they coined money and promulgated laws; they went to war, concluded treaties, and contracted even royal alliances. The King's suzerainty, though latent and in a manner recognized, was shadowy and remote, and a Count of the Cerdagne was much more intimately concerned, in the great issues of life and death, with his neighbours of Toulouse and Barcelona than with the distant Kings of France. They inter-married with each other, betrothing their children in infancy, after the manner of our Norman Kings; and their territories were constantly in a state of flux. Thus, Wilfred-le-Velu, Count of Barcelona, dying in 898, left the Cerdagne and the Conflent separately to one of his sons; and Wilfred, Count of the Ampurias, Pierrelate, and Roussillon, whom the King Lothaire addressed as Duke and friend, left to his three sons respectively the

counties of Ampurias and of Roussillon, and the bishopric of Elne.

They founded or rebuilt such cities as Perpignan; monasteries like those of St. Andrew of Exalada, St. Michel de Cuxa, and St. Martin du Canigou, besides a host of lesser ones, such as those of Valbone, St. Clement, St. Esteve, d'Espira, and St. Pol; and great cathedrals like those of Elne and St. Jean de Perpignan. Commerce greatly revived under their rule; the Genoese and Pisans traded at Port Vendres and Collioure. An elaborate system of irrigation, the finest in France, made their lands fertile; water-mills were constructed; Synods and Councils of the Church were held to curb the lawlessness of the times, and justice was formally administered. The approach of the Millennium, and with it the anticipated destruction of the world, quickened the spiritual life of the land, and the Counts were foremost in good deeds, in acts of piety, and in self-devotion. The crisis past, an era of pilgrimages set in. Berenger, Bishop of Elne, is said to have visited Jerusalem in 1027, and the Count Gauzfred the shrine of St. James at Compostella. Between 1055 and 1091 the Count Bernard of Corneilla, and William, Viscount of Castell' Nou and Archdeacon of Elne, made pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Finally, Count Gerard of Roussillon, with a number of his father's vassals, joined the Crusade under Raymond of St. Giles, and greatly distinguished himself in the holy wars. He was one of the seven chiefs of the advanced corps which reached Nicæa on May 6, 1097. He commanded a portion of the southern cavalry of France at the capture of Nicæa and Antioch, and, with Godfrey de Bouillon, was one of the first Crusaders to enter Jerusalem. He returned in 1100 via Constantinople, and, in spite of his great services to the Church, saw no ill in attacking the Bishop of Elne, wasting his lands and maltreating his subjects. Other great heroes of this period were Bernard, Count of Besalu, surnamed "Taillefer" and the "Father of his Country," who was drowned in swimming across the Rhone; and the Count William-Jordan of the Cerdagne, who fought in the Holy Land under the banner of the Count Raymond of St. Giles, who at his death made him

the heir to his Eastern conquests. Like our own Richard of the Lion Heart, he returned after performing prodigies of valour and devotion in warring against the infidel, to die by the hand of an obscure archer in his own country.

Finally, in 1172, the Count Gerard of Roussillon, dying without issue, made Alphonso II., King of Aragon, his heir, and the Pyrénées-Orientales passed to the Spanish Crown. But it was not till 1258 that the Kings of France finally ceded to it, under the Treaty of Corbeil, their shadowy rights of sovereignty, inherited from the days of Charlemagne.

VI. The Rule of Aragon

PINES IN THE PYRENEES

Alphonso II., son of Raymond Berenger IV., last Count of Barcelona and Petronilla, Queen of Aragon, was now master of the Roussillon and the mountain districts of the Eastern Pyrenees, though nominally these were still a fief of the French Crown. Alphonso was a brilliant cavalier and troubadour, but not unmindful of the value of his new territories. They were essential to him as a connecting link with his great possessions in Southern France, and his policy was to gratify his Trans-Pyrenean subjects by confirming and extending their privileges. He frequently visited and resided at Perpignan, and spent his summers at Hix in the Cerdagne. He founded the fortresses of Puigcerda and Valador, and strengthened and permitted many others, as at Marquixanes and Rivesaltes, one of his principal objects being to strengthen the Church and the people, as against the nobles, who were already powerful enough and often difficult to control. At

IN THE PLACE AT VERNET (*page* 67)

LORD ROBERTS LAYING THE FOUNDATION-STONE OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH AT VERNET (*page* 65)

his death he left legacies to the Church of St. Jean of Perpignan, and to several of the abbeys and priories in the Pyrénées-Orientales.

His successor, Peter I., one of the most picturesque and gallant Sovereigns of a picturesque age, relaxed his grip over the new provinces in favour of his uncle Sancho, who administered them in his own name as Count and Lord of the Roussillon. These privileges, amounting to quasi-sovereignty, were still further extended in favour of his son and successor, Nuño Sanchez, one of the heroes of the time. As the King's kinsman, Nuño Sanchez accompanied him upon many important missions, and with his son Nuño was present at the great battle of Navas de Tolosa, which broke the Moorish power in Spain. King Peter, who was everywhere regarded as a model for the chivalry of the South, was supported by his kinsmen, who greatly distinguished themselves. Nuño the third, though very young, was knighted on the field of this battle, in which William of Oms, Arnold of Banyuls, and many other Catalan nobles and gentlemen of the Roussillon, took a glorious part.

The Albigensian heresy now drew the attention of Europe, and King Peter, as first Alferez, or Standard-Bearer, of the Church, threw his weight against the heretics, notwithstanding his ties of kinship with Raymond, Count of Toulouse, and his own interests as suzerain of Béziers. But the ambitious designs of Simon de Montfort, who, under cover of his undoubted zeal for religion, aimed at the sovereignty of the South of France, roused the anger of King Peter, who in September, 1213, advanced with a small body of troops to the relief of Toulouse. Then followed the Battle of Muret, in which the King with the flower of his chivalry was slain, while his only son, a child of six, remained in the hands of De Montfort. The long minority of James, surnamed in after-years the Conqueror, strengthened the power of Nuño Sanchez, and accentuated that separation of the Trans-Pyrenean districts from the rest of Spain which has since ended in their becoming, in spite of deep affinities of blood and speech, an integral part of France.

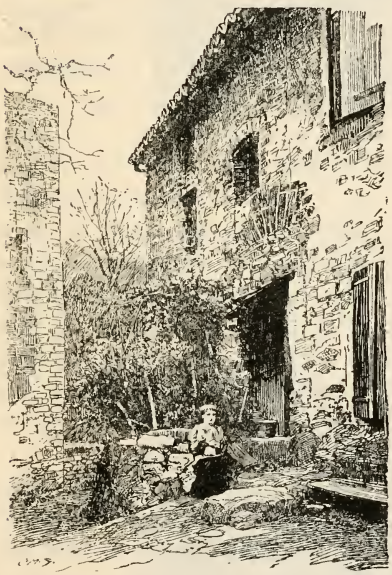
In 1225 the young King James escaped from the control of his Barons, and having within two years composed their

feuds, which throughout his minority had been carried to excess, resolved upon a great expedition against Majorca. The Balearic Moors had for centuries preyed upon the Catalan waters and ravaged the neighbouring coasts. Their destruction was a necessary as well as a pious work, and their fertile lands and rich possessions were a further inducement to the turbulent nobles of Aragon. In this great expedition, of which there is record alike in the memoirs of King James and in those of the chivalrous Muntaner, the Catalan Froissart, the men of Roussillon under Nuño took a prominent part. Nuño, who had succeeded his father Nuño Sanchez, filled a high command and distinguished himself greatly. With his late enemy William of Monçade, Viscount of Bearn, he led the van of the Crusading army, and, landing at St. Ponce, defeated the islanders with a loss of 1,500 men. The battle now became general, and the Christian forces under these two nobles were nearly beaten back, when James I. came to their succour with a chosen body of troops, largely composed of Catalans from the Roussillon. The capital was besieged. Nuño with 300 cavaliers checked the Moors in their attempt to cut off the water-supply, and caused them the loss of 500 men and their leader, whose head was flung over the ramparts into the town. Nuño now conducted negotiations with the defenders, who had offered to capitulate; but these falling through, the town was carried by storm, December 31, 1229, with a heavy loss. In 1235 Nuño took part, with a fresh contingent from Perpignan, in the conquest of Iviça, which King James had bestowed upon the Archbishop of Tarragona. In 1238 he accompanied the victorious monarch to the conquest of Valencia, and dying without issue at Perpignan in 1242, he left all his territories to King James.

In 1258 St. Louis formally yielded up all his rights of suzerainty over the Roussillon and adjoining districts to the Crown of Aragon, and it might have been thought that the Trans-Pyrenean Catalans were now once for all united to their brethren across the border. But the tendency to divide up their estates had long been persistent amongst the Gothic Counts, from whom the Kings of Aragon were descended. The Trans-Pyrenean provinces and the fief of

Montpellier were not considered as an integral part of the Aragonese dominions; their people were habituated to regard themselves as in a measure distinct; and the new conquests made from the Balearic Moors formed no part of the hereditary possessions of the Crown. King James therefore resolved to erect them into an independent monarchy, with its capital at Perpignan, and to bestow them upon his younger son, with the title of King of Majorca. This "partition" of Aragon influenced the history of the Pyrénées-Orientales for the next hundred years.

VII. The Kings of Majorca



A VILLAGE IN THE PYRENEES

The new monarchy was doomed from the outset. The elder branch not only had the material advantage, but its members showed greater aptitude and force of character. The whole sentiment of Aragon, roused to a high pitch of patriotic pride and feeling by the brilliant conquests and long and successful reign of James el Conquistador, was opposed to this splitting up of the realm, and it became immediately apparent upon the old King's death that his eldest son, Peter, now King of Aragon, would not acquiesce in his father's will. The King of Majorca had to submit, and a treaty was signed in the convent of the Preaching Friars at Perpignan, January 20, 1279, under which he agreed to do homage as a vassal to his brother, to serve him as his feudal lord, to deliver up when called upon to do so, the fortresses of Perpignan, Majorca, and Puigcerda, to assist at the Cortes of Catalonia, and to accept its laws and

usages and the money of Barcelona. During his own lifetime, however, he was absolved from complying with the most humiliating of these terms. It was a case of *force majeure*, and King James accepted the inevitable with the best grace he could muster. In pursuance of this enforced treaty he accompanied his Over-Lord to war, distinguished himself by his valour at the siege of Balaguer, and rendered other loyal and knightly service.

But the circumstances of the time, and the position of the new kingdom between the upper and the nether millstones of France and Aragon, were adverse to the continuance of these good relations. In March, 1282, there occurred that fierce outbreak against French oppression which is known in history as the Sicilian Vespers. The King of Aragon's support of the Sicilians brought down upon him the anathema of the French Pope. He was declared incapable of sovereignty, and his throne, by a violent exercise of the Papal authority, was conferred upon Charles de Valois, second son of Philip le Hardi. A Crusade was proclaimed, and armies assembled at Narbonne, Carcassonne, and Toulouse, full of greed and fervour for the conquest of Catholic Aragon. The story of these events is told in the picturesque and immortal pages of Muntaner, to which the reader is referred for a lifelike picture of the times. Here, and for the purpose of this narrative, which is but to give a rapid impression of all that has transpired in a little country whose character cannot be understood without some reference to its past, it must suffice to mention the most salient facts.

King Peter, undismayed by the thunders of the Church and the mighty host arrayed against him, lost no time in striking the first blow. Doubting his brother's loyalty, or his ability to resist the advancing tide, he made a sudden raid by night across the Pyrenees, from Ampourdan, upon Perpignan, and, forcing an entrance into the citadel, seized the royal treasure. King James escaped through the main sewer to the château of La Rocca, leaving his wife and children in his brother's power. But the citizens of Perpignan rose in arms, and the Aragonese, finding his position untenable, retired across the Pyrenees with his spoils.

The Crusaders now advanced, 60,000 foot and 12,000

THE CLOISTERS AT ELNE (*page* 47)

ANDORRAN SHEPHERD (*page* 28)

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horse, and the beautiful plain of the Roussillon, which suns itself here with its myriad vines and rich gardens under the snowy heights of the Canigou, paid the price of its wealth and of its position on this highway of battle, in ruined homesteads and all the harsh penalties of mediæval war. Though led by King Philip himself and both his sons, and accompanied by the Cardinal Legate of the Pope, the Crusading army was inspired by no high or chivalrous motive. It settled like a blight upon the villages in its path, and forced its way with torch and violence into the strong cities of an allied Sovereign. Elne, which offered some resistance, was taken by assault, and half of it was burnt to the ground. The châteaux of Castell' Nou and Montesquiou alone flew the banner of Aragon. Peter advanced with his cavalry and light troops as far as Collioure, which held out for its Sovereign Prince, King James, and, calling upon it to open its gates, was shot at from the ramparts, in revenge for which he burnt its shipping. Thus was the whole land divided up into three parts, which were held respectively for Aragon, for Majorca, and for France, and the people groaned under the burden of the Crusaders and the answering raids of Spain. The Albères still raised their haughty crests against the French advance, and King Philip sought in vain for a passage across them, when the Abbot of Valbone showed him an unfrequented path over the Col de la Massane, and the French host at last swept over into Spain.

Four months later King Philip, stricken with disease, was carried back over the Col de Perthus, his last hours vexed by the shouts of the Spaniards, who were with difficulty restrained by the Spanish cavaliers from falling upon the royal litter. His army was in scarcely better condition. Shattered by disease, it presented but a sorry spectacle. The Legate, who had so proudly accompanied it as the representative of Heaven, came hurrying back, a broken old man in terror of his life, to die at Perpignan, an object of general execration. King Peter of Aragon succumbed like his brother-in-law, the hardy Philip, to the strain of the campaign; and King James, who alone survived of the three Sovereigns whose fortunes were involved in the war, found his kingdom in ruins. Roussillon had suffered desperately

under the heel of the beaten French troops, and Majorca, the beautiful isle, was no longer in his keeping. Outraged and beaten, he offered single combat to his nephew, Alphonso, King of Aragon, for the settlement of their differences. But it was not till 1291 that peace was concluded. Alphonso, Charles de Valois, and James, met under the commanding heights of Bellegarde, where that fortress now looks out over France and Spain. The tale of the extraordinary precautions they took, each for his own security, is significant of the doubt and ill-will engendered by war in the minds of men who were bound to each other by the closest ties of blood and family relationship. Seven years more were, however, to elapse before, upon the accession of a new King to the throne of Aragon, the island of Majorca was returned to its rightful owner.

Peace was now established in the distracted land, and the last years of James, first King of Majorca, passed without further disaster. But the appetite for war, engendered by these events, was not easily quenched amongst his nobility. The hot Catalan blood must of needs seek adventure wherever it was to be found, and the profession of arms had its rewards as well as its pains. The great Jazbert, Viscount of Castell' Nou, found his proud castle on his hill too small to contain his spirit, and went off to aid the Moorish King of Murcia in his siege of Ceuta. The Moslems attacked by land, the Viscount and his Catalans by sea. Ceuta of Granada was carried by assault, and Jazbert won great fame and was named Admiral of Castile. His uncle, Dalmau de Castell' Nou, who was known as one of the bravest chevaliers of his time, crossed over and won as great laurels in Sicily.

King James died in 1311, leaving six children, of whom the eldest, James, became a monk; the second, Sancho, succeeded him as King of Majorca, and ruled in peace and prosperity; the third, the illustrious Dom Ferdinand, led the Catalans to Sicily and Greece upon the most notable of all their adventures; the fourth, Philip, took Orders and became a Canon of Elne; the fifth, Sanchia, became Queen of Naples; and the sixth, Isabel, Infanta of Castile.

The reign of King Sancho of Majorca gave his scattered

kingdom, doomed as it was to travail and an early extinction, an interval of peace. He was forced, as a vassal of Aragon, to take part in the Spanish expedition to Sardinia against the Pisans, but his attention was in the main given to the internal administration of his kingdom; and the attachment which the French Catalans still feel for the old dynasty of Majorca, who made of Perpignan a royal capital, dates from this too brief period of prosperity. It was in this reign that the foundations of the Cathedral of St. Jean were laid.

Meanwhile abroad, in Sicily and Greece and upon the battle-fields of Granada, the King's brother, the Infante Dom Ferdinand, won renown for his people, and made the Catalans known for their prowess throughout Europe. The expedition of the Catalans to the Morea, set out in vivid terms by their chronicler, Ramon Muntaner, is one of the strangest episodes in the history of the race; and there is no passage in any chronicle more touching or picturesque than that in which the brave old man tells of how he brought from Sicily, through storms and all the dangers of war, the infant son of Dom Ferdinand, to the safe refuge of the palace at Perpignan and the arms of the two Queens, his aunt and grandmother. Dom Ferdinand perished by the sword upon a battle-field in Greece at the early age of thirty-six, while his little son, warmed at the breast of Muntaner, lived to become the last unhappy King of Majorca, upon the death of his uncle Sancho.

The story of his relations with his kinsman, Peter the Ceremonious, King of Aragon, and of his own ultimate downfall, is too long to tell here in detail. From the first it was plain to all men that there could be no peace between Majorca and Aragon. Already upon the death of Sancho, who left no son, the King of Aragon had claimed the throne, thus showing how Aragon chafed under the partition of the realm; but when King Peter came to the throne of his fathers he resolved, with the masterful ability and the cold and calculating temper which were part of him, to force the issue. His cousin of Majorca was no match for him. The unique relationship between them was at all times a galling one, but it was rendered almost insupportable by the haughty

punctiliousness of Peter. When King James arrived upon a visit to him, he was kept waiting, and was eventually given a seat much lower than Peter's, not without discussion as to whether he should have a seat at all! On their way to Aragon together to visit the Pope, a similar incident arose, and the two Sovereigns with their escorts were with difficulty restrained from falling upon each other under the very eyes of the Pontiff. The only hope for Majorca lay in a close alliance with France, but this King James threw away from sheer ineptitude. War at length broke out between the two kingdoms, peopled by members of the same race. Peter issued a proclamation declaring his vassal James contumacious, and his kingdom of Majorca confiscated. In 1343 he took by force the island of Majorca and invaded the Roussillon. Perpignan was besieged, and within a year King James had ceased to rule. In 1349, having sold his lordship of Montpellier to France, he made one last appeal to arms, appearing before Majorca with a fleet of 24 ships, 3,000 men, and 1,400 horse. On October 25, performing prodigies of valour, he was killed, and the force he had brought with him was completely destroyed. His son James, a lad of thirteen, fought by his side, was wounded, and was taken prisoner. Escaping in after-years, he made more than one bid for his father's throne, but, like our own exiled Stuarts, without success.

Thus was the kingdom of Majorca brought to an end. Its creation was a political mistake; yet, in spite of the disabilities under which it laboured, it left a permanent mark upon the prosperity of the Roussillon, and, had it been suffered to develop in peace, must have contributed even more than it did to the growth of Catalan power this side of the Pyrenees. Perpignan as the royal capital saw its best days under the Majorcan Kings. Many of the finest canals were made during the period. The forests were conserved. Industry and commerce were encouraged. Trade flourished to a remarkable degree, with the Levant, with the Barbary States, and throughout the Mediterranean. The possession of Majorca gave the little kingdom a maritime bent. Justice was well administered. The liberty of the subject advanced, the Kings of Majorca being too dependent on the good-will

A HERMIT ON HIS TRAVELS

A VILLAGE CHAPEL

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and support of their people to take high-handed measures against them. Charters were granted to the towns, and oppressive usages abolished. The Roussillon, in fact, profited greatly from the decentralization involved in the creation of this little kingdom, and the memory of its Majorcan Kings is still green in the hearts of its people—or, at least of those of them who know anything of the history of their country.

VIII. The Return to Spain and the Final Triumph of France

WOOD-GATHERERS

The Kings of Aragon were alive to these facts, and at first did their best to pursue the policy of Majorca so far as it was consistent with the unity of the Catalan race. Little by little the Roussillon became almost entirely assimilated with Catalonia, in its laws, its customs, and its usages. Its trade continued greatly to expand. Its cloth, in particular, was renowned for its excellence. The acquisitions of the Kings of Aragon in Italy and Sicily necessitated a maritime development, and the wars of the Catalans in Greece and the Black Sea had given them an exceptional knowledge of geography. The Atlas Catalan, now in the National Library at Paris, was made in 1374, and in 1415 Prince Henry of Portugal sought out the learned Catalan Jacques at Majorca to appoint him director of his famous school of navigation at Sagres. Collioure, St. Laurent, and Canet, were frequented ports. Perpignan was a thriving commercial city, and the Rous-

sillon ships visited Spain, France, Flanders, Italy, Sardinia, Sicily, Cyprus, and Rhodes, and the ports of Northern Africa, Egypt, and Asia Minor. Its towns continued to enjoy remarkable freedom and civic rights, and irrigation enriched the agriculture of the country, as it does to this day. Traffic and war introduced into the country large numbers of slaves of all shades of colour. Saracens, Moors, Turks, Circassians, Tartars, Egyptians, and Russians, toiled in the Catalan fields and cities, and their blood, with the easy licence of the times and of a Southern people, became gradually mingled with that of their masters. Throughout this period the Catalans this side of the Pyrenees looked to their own defence, a proud, independent, and warlike, but also a factious and quarrelsome, people. At the fall of Constantinople in 1453, 1,500 Catalans, the only representatives of Western Christianity, took part in its defence.

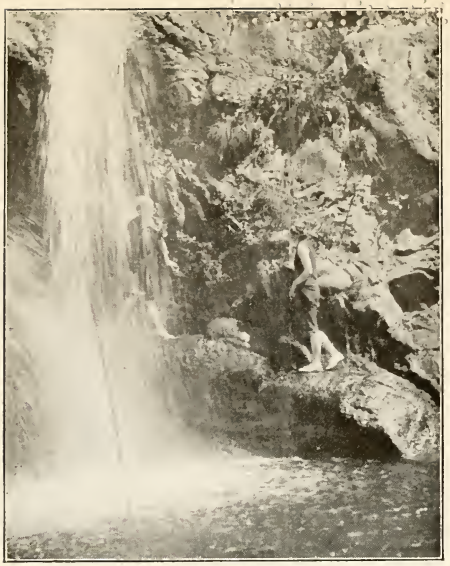
There always was, however, a separatist tendency under the apparent unity of Catalan life under the Aragonese Kings. The barrier of the Pyrenees remained. Memories in the Roussillon of three generations of independence under Kings of their own, of quasi-independence previous to that, the magnetism of France with her ancient claims and growing power, and, lastly, disputed successions and discords in Aragon itself, tended to counteract the assimilation of the Cis-Pyrenean Catalans with those of Spain. Upon the death of King Martin of Aragon, no less than five claimants to the throne appeared. In 1458 there was war and discord between John II. of Aragon and his son Don Carlos on account of the Crown of Navarre. Don Carlos was the idol of the Catalans, and they became seriously disaffected. At length King John took the fatal step of mortgaging the Roussillon to Louis XI. of France, in return for help to control the rebellious Catalans and carry on war elsewhere. Their revolt becoming more serious, Louis XI. took the opportunity of moving 22,000 men across the border into the Roussillon, and for thirty-one years (1462-1493) the French remained in possession. Perpignan during this period sustained one of the most memorable sieges in its history, displaying all the tenacity and valour characteristic

of a Spanish city on the defensive. The old King John, though now seventy-six years of age, threw himself into the beleaguered city, and swore to his people assembled in the cathedral to hold it to the death. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he bore himself with great valour and fortitude. His heroic defence roused all Catalonia and Aragon in his favour. His son advanced to his support, and for the moment the French were driven back across the frontier. But they speedily returned, and all the wide-open country about Perpignan became the battle-ground of the contending armies. The strong châteaux remained in the hands of the French. Elne was taken in 1474, and Don Bernard D'Oms and many other Catalan noblemen and gentlemen were shamefully put to death and otherwise ill-treated. The French advanced to Figueras across the Pyrenees, and Perpignan was once more reduced to extremities. The old King was now at the end of his resources. He could do no more than hold out hopes and blandishments to the heroic city, bestowing upon it by letters patent the title of Most Faithful for reward. He was so hard pressed for funds that he had to pawn his very sables in winter. At length there came the inevitable end, and in 1475 Perpignan, for all her tenacity, fell before the aggressive valour of the French.

In 1493 Charles VIII. gave back to Spain the conquered territories, but the Crown of Aragon was now merged in that of Spain. New counsels prevailed at the Spanish Court which were little to the liking of its Catalan subjects. The Inquisition laid its iron hand upon a race ever resentful of control. The cold and fanatical temper of Philip II. was as little to their liking as it was to that of the English across the water. The country was ravaged by the plague and exploited by the tax-gatherers of Spain. The Catalans had now but one desire, and that, to break away from the Spanish yoke. In 1640 Perpignan called upon the French to enter and take possession, and in 1659 the Treaty of the Pyrenees finally transferred to France the district now known as the Pyrénées-Orientales.

It has known wars since then, it has seen Spanish armies upon its soil, it was swept, like the rest of France, by the Revolution ; but it has remained true to its French con-

nection. The Catalan is still half a Spaniard. In his homes, in his cities, in his churches, in his manners and ways, he shows unmistakably his Spanish origin and blood. Yet he is now a confirmed Frenchman, proud of his French nationality, and disdainful of his brethren across the Pyrenees. The French genius for assimilation has mastered the headstrong Catalan blood, and the history of the process since Mazarin seized upon this morsel of Spain is one of the most interesting in the psychology of nations. The most powerful contributing force has undoubtedly been that of the French Revolution. The Catalan has always been a republican at heart, and when the Rights of Man were announced, and Kings and titles swept away, he found his natural vocation and became a loyal son of France.



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PALM AND PINE IN VERNET PARK (*page* 61)

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BOOK II

THE CONFLENT, OR THE MOUNTAIN VALLEYS

CHAPTER I

VERNET OF THE ENGLISH

VERNET

How old Vernet is, so lately come into fame as an English resort, or when the first human settlement clustered about the banks of its little river, one cannot say. So beautiful and sheltered a valley, with its rich soil and its running water, must have tempted the earliest men who moved up the great highway which runs past it from the mountains to the sea. The Roman legionary, marching up this old Via Confluentana, must often have turned aside here to bathe in its hot springs. The Latin settler, who has left his name to Corneilla, but a mile away, must have loved the peace of its quiet valley, and hearkened, as we do now, to the singing of its nightingales in spring ; the trader, bent upon gain, must have known something of the iron-bound mountains which, shutting it in, still yield their quota of ore. The Saracen invader, scattering his light horsemen all over these marches between France and Spain, must have levied his human toll on all this shining valley. But in fact we have no existing record of Vernet, upon deed

or parchment, before the year 874, when, although the memory of the conquering Mussulman was still fresh in the minds of the people, the last of their cavaliers had already long since been withdrawn across the Spanish border. At this time Vernet was already in possession of its old church of St. Saturnin, the ruins of which still linger amidst the apple orchards down by the banks of its river; and on the hill-top the old château tower, which still glows in the last rays of each evening's sunlight, was already raising its massive bulk. In the year 1007 it was bestowed by Wilfred, Count of the Cerdagne, on the newly-founded abbey of St. Martin, and a few years later its church, which appertained to the See of Elne, was transferred to the Abbot in exchange for the Church of St. Eulalia at Marquixanes.

Vernet, for the first 900 years of its recorded existence, lay lower down in the valley, by the edge of the Cadi, and it might in its first primitive outlines have been there still, had not a sudden flood swept the greater part of it away, and induced the inhabitants to transfer their homes to their present picturesque site on the hill above it. It was at this date also (1710) that the château chapel, which had long appertained to the Abbots of St. Martin, became the parish church. Meanwhile Vernet, the village by the water, ran its appointed course, overshadowed by the great abbey which loomed amidst the solitudes above it. Yet it retained even in its earliest days a lively sentiment of its own rights, and some of that spirit of independence which characterizes it to this day. The Abbots early released it from the burden of the *corvée* and certain other feudal impositions, known as the Bad Usages, such as the right of the Over-Lord to the property of his vassals dying intestate or without heirs. The inhabitants were, however, obliged (1052), at the cost of much personal labour and discomfort, to toil up the steep ascent to the abbey with the provisions required for its sustenance.

In return we may be sure that the brightest of their children were taught at the abbey school, whence in some cases they rose to offices of affluence and dignity, which must otherwise have been wholly beyond their reach. One of them named Peter, from the adjoining hamlet of Sahorre,

reached the high place of Abbot of St. Martin's, and another Peter of Vernet became Abbot in 1339. In the year 1186 the Abbots constructed the first *établissement thermal* at Vernet, with a view to placing its healing waters at the disposal of the sick and afflicted. This consisted of a swimming bath arched over like its successor, the present Piscine Romaine, 37 feet long by 15 feet wide, and 3 feet in depth, into which all the sick plunged without distinction. In 1303 separate baths were provided and substantial improvements effected by the Abbot, Arnold de Corbiac. In 1339 the Abbot Peter conferred upon his native village the privilege of electing its own Consuls and being governed by them. This charter offers an interesting illustration of the substantial measure of liberty and self-government which even as far back as the fourteenth century the people had won for themselves.

But while Vernet thus profited by its connection with the Abbey of St. Martin, it shared also in the disasters which overtook it. In 1347 the Infante of Majorca, after his attack on the abbey, fell upon the little village, took its strong château by force of arms, and maltreated the inhabitants. The damage done to the château alone was estimated at 500 florins. The unfortunate lessee of the baths of Vernet, Jacques Pascal by name, was, on the other hand, like so many of his compatriots, accused by the King of Aragon of having given the Infante assistance. His property was confiscated, and he himself was put to death. These circumstances reduced the population of Vernet from sixty to twenty persons, at which it stood in 1439.

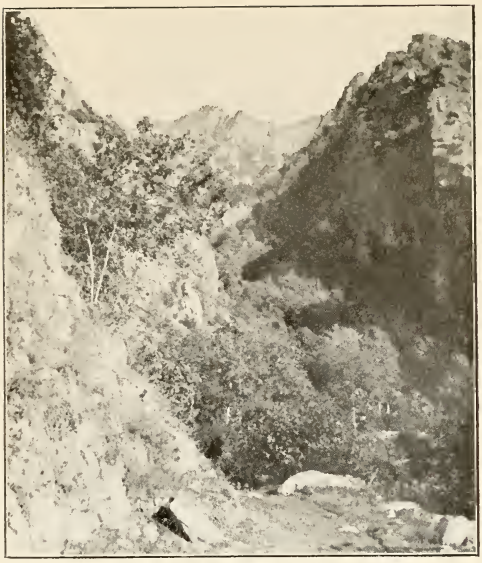
In 1654 the French under the Prince of Bourbon-Conti, having taken Villefranche by storm, and put its garrison to the sword, razed to the ground the greater part of the old château at Vernet, of which some portion of the tower still remains.

In 1698 the Abbot Peter Pouderoux resolved to establish a military hospital at Vernet and to greatly improve the baths, and so great was the concourse of visitors who came in consequence to take the waters that he soon recovered, we are told, the heavy expenses he had incurred. Vernet, in fact, in the good Abbot's time, proved a paying investment.

But there is no copyright in the pages of Fortune. His baths were destroyed by a fire some years later, and in 1788 the last Abbot of St. Martin's, Dom Grumet de Montpré, in view of the lamentable state into which they were fallen, which prevented their being used, "although of well-known efficacy and value in the healing of many ills," transferred his rights in them to Dr. Barréra, a military doctor of Mont Louis, on condition that he and his successors, while taxing the rich at their discretion, would allow the poor of Vernet and Casteil to take the baths free of charge. For these people special bathrooms are kept apart. He was paid £500 down, and an annual sum of £9 for this transfer of his rights.

The good Abbot did not, however, live long to enjoy these and the other emoluments of his extinct abbey, for he fell a victim to the guillotine in Paris in the days of the Terror.

Since that day the bathing establishment at Vernet has, in spite of vicissitude, grown in magnitude and importance. In 1834 it became the property of two retired Commandants of Villefranche, after whom the old Hôtel des Commandants is named. In 1846 it received a notable visit from Ibrahim Pasha, the ex-Viceroy of Egypt, who came here for his health's sake, with a large escort of infantry; and in 1905, having meanwhile passed into the hands of its present owners, it came into notice for the first time as an English winter resort. Each year since then it has grown in favour and importance, and bids fair now to become one of the most frequented and delightful of such winter resorts. This singular development in its long history it owes to the genius of M. Émile Kiechle, a charming and versatile little man who has given all his heart, and brain, and enthusiasm, his life almost, to its making. Under his auspices, the rude hospitality of Abbot Pouderoux, the simple fare of the old Commandants of Villefranche, have given way to the comfort and luxury of our own times, and from November to May this little Pyrenean village becomes a fragment of England. Its Casino, which is thronged in summer with lively folk from Spain and the Midi of France, is converted into an English club, with the solid comforts of our own people and some of the lighter graces of the South.



ON THE ROAD TO CASTEIL (*page* 75)

ON THE ROAD TO CASTEIL (*page* 75)

In its streets one sees faces, one hears names, that are famous in our own land. It has been visited by Lord Roberts, by Rudyard Kipling, by Princess Henry of Battenberg, and it is a fact, I believe, that King Edward VII. himself nearly came here in the last year of his life. Such are the singular revolutions of the wheel of Fate.

Modern Vernet, like all Gaul, may be divided into three parts—the old village on the hill, the new quarter which is built about the main highway, and the Établissement des Bains. Humanly speaking there is no distinction between the first two; the same folk live in both. But architecturally, and from the point of view of the lover of the picturesque, there is all the difference between that which is simple and old and full of charm, and that which is uniform and pretentious and dull. One might come a long way to see the little village of irregular houses, with its dark alleys and inner courtyards and picturesque survivals of a bygone century, but nothing but necessity need detain one in its newer portion. And yet to the good people of Vernet it is the newer village that is wrapped in distinction. Here reside the more prosperous members of the community, the successful tradespeople, the inn-keepers, the professional gentlemen, and even the *Curé*, who has left his beautiful old church on the hill, with its walls of embrowned gold, to come and live down here by the little chapel-of-ease which fronts the *place*.

But let us look closer at all these good folk, who to the number now of nearly 1,600 souls inhabit this little Pyrenean town. Here by the wayside, spreading his wares with a sort of Oriental licence across both flanks of it, is Monsieur M——, the proprietor of the Bazaar du Canigou, a shop full of amazing trivialities, collected by him for the seduction of the stranger. This strange collection offers a curious commentary on the ways, one might even hazard to say the brains, of the travelling public, for that it fulfils some need the prosperity of Monsieur M—— is here to testify.

A few doors off is the post-office, where three frail women wrestle vainly with the multiplicity and intricacy of the French postal rules; the English visitors whom they do not understand; the telegraph, which ticks remorselessly all

through the day; and the telephone, whose only redeeming point is the silvery voice of the little operator, who speaks through it in the most charming French imaginable, and—such is the national gift of temperament—carries on the most diverting dialogues, punctuated with laughter, in spite of her evident fatigue. It is all so different to the sober little English post-office of the same class. One often wonders how these good people, who know but one language, and that their own, can deal effectually with the mass of international correspondence that ebbs and flows here each day; but the Post-Office all over the world is something of a mystery.

Here is Monsieur Mercader, the pastrycook, a purely human institution, and with visitors, at least, the most popular soul in Vernet. Simple of heart, and as honest and kind as he is fantastic in style, this old man whose gaiety has survived thirty years of domestic misfortune does credit to his race. His *gâteau des milles-feuilles* crumble under the teeth of unnumbered clients, and his jams of the *framboises du Canigou*, and other fruits with a local flavour, travel all over Europe, and even to the shores of Africa. He loves all birds and beasts and little children, and a very kindly heart glows under his bizarre exterior.

Here is Madame M——, who supplements her husband's labours, which enrich him elsewhere, by keeping an excellent grocery store. She and her rival, Madame G——, have both given daughters in marriage this year; and since a wedding is always an event, touching or ironical according to one's humour, here is one's recollection of the ceremony.

Picture a superb November day of great clarity and beauty, the mountains all green and purple, standing out in perfect outline against the brilliant sky. There is a powder of snow on the Canigou. It is the wedding-day of Mademoiselle M——. The whole village, of old matrons and comely girls and uniformed gendarmes and everyone who can escape from his work, is assembled along the sunlit street to see the bride pass in her white satin gown and veil to the *mairie*, which stands for the secular government of France, and thence to the little chapel-of-ease across the *place*. But the door of the little grocery store remains open even up to the last

moment before the wedding, and entering customers are served. Such is French thrift and devotion to business.

Monsieur M—— at length emerges, his daughter on his arm, looking like a Marquis in his silk hat and frock-coat; the Bazaar du Canigou has for once departed from his mind, and emotion takes the place of business craft on his strong face. Mademoiselle looks beautiful, after the manner of brides. In to-day's clear air and vivid light every tree and wall and balcony is a picture fresh from Nature's easel. The untidy and quite unimportant *place* is raised to the level of a masterpiece; and the little chapel-of-ease, with its belfry *à jour*, and the green acacia before its door, and the peacock-hued mountains standing up behind it, is a poem. Into it from the drab of the *mairie* pass the white bride and her people, and through the half-open door there is a vision of golden tapers and kneeling angels on the altar, and the old *Curé* in white and gold vestments standing in a haze of shimmering light, the small acolytes in scarlet and lace, moving with swinging censers up the aisle. It seems well that for this brief half-hour the spiritual side of life, and even of so practical a thing as a French marriage, should be given its chance.

The *place* itself, notwithstanding its slatternly character, is full of a certain interest. With its *mairie*, its *gendarmerie*, and its fountain bearing the effigy of Madame la République, it stands in a definite way for the centralized government of France—so different in these respects from the village green or the market-place of a small English town. Here on Sunday evenings during the summer the old Catalan love of dancing finds expression, and on feast-days the *jongleurs* sit aloft on a high scaffolding decked with flags and foliage, and play old Catalan airs, while the people dance round a green pine-tree brought down from the mountains for the purpose. There is no place in the world where you will see more pretty girls in the space of half an hour than at Vernet; and once you begin looking for beauty, you will find a wonderful amount of it hidden away here amongst the old cottages on the hill—the beauty of fine profiles and dark eyes, of fresh faces rosy in winter from the brisk mountain air, of lithe, graceful figures, of abundant hair that draws no

embellishment from the art of the milliner. A hat of any kind is rare on any woman's head in Vernet, and when some village beauty dons one it eclipses half her charm.

Round the corner by the *place* is the ballroom where, as throughout this country, the people dance in winter or wet weather, extracting a wonderful amount of joy from life with a perfectly admirable self-restraint. I do not think that, in all my experience of these hills, I have ever once seen two men engaged in a passionate brawl (I do not suggest that this *never* happens) or a single one of these charming girls behaving otherwise than with a delightful propriety.

What, I wonder, becomes of all these pretty girls who do *blanchissage* by the rushing Cadi and dance in the village *place?* They seem by some miracle to disappear, and emerge again as plain middle-aged persons, or very stout old ladies, without a trace of their early charm. It must be the Southern sun that does it; or must we hold with Victor Hugo that Nature is powerless without Art?

"*Dans tous les lieux primitifs et rustiques, il n'y a que des jeunes filles et des vieilles femmes c'est à dire des fleurs et . . . ma foi! cherchez l'autre mot dans Ronsard. La femme proprement dite, cette rose magnifique qui s'épanouit de vingt-cinq à quarante ans, est un produit exquis et rare de la civilisation extrême, de la civilisation élégante, et n'existe que dans les villes.*"

As to the men, one cannot speak too well, as a stranger, of their sensible ways, their hospitable and friendly bearing, and their readiness at all times to be of any neighbourly service. So often, in the course of my walks about these sunlit valleys, have I been asked by some pleasant fellow to step into his house, or had a chair put out for me under the dappled shade of his vine, or been engaged by him in frank and intelligent conversation. English children do not come yet in very large numbers to Vernet, but those who do, like three small boys who were here this winter, are very hospitably entertained. It is either Mademoiselle M—— who will give them a chocolate, or Mademoiselle G—— who is learning English and will not let them pass without an attention, or the old orange-woman who gives them far too much for a penny, or the big stonemason on the hill who insists when he sees them, on taking them up into his loft and enriching

M. ÉMILE KIECHLE
Director of Vernet-les-Bains
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HÔTEL DU PARC, VERNET (*page* 64)

them with enormous pears and ruddy apples. The kindness thus shown to the stranger is not of an emotional sort; it is the quite normal expression of a solid and sensible people, who from time immemorial have respected themselves, have always had a due regard for their own rights, and have no doubt of being properly treated in return. Here in these mountain valleys there is little about them that is either typically French or typically Southern. They live as it were in a little Utopian republic, in which every man seems to have a field and a house of his own; in which all share alike the great natural endowments of clear mountain air, bright unfailing sunlight, and pure water, while none are rich, and no one apparently is very dreadfully poor. The great noble, the big landed proprietor, the titled family, are conspicuous by their absence. The Church takes a very quiet and almost an insignificant place. The poor *Curé*, who works hard to eke out his minute stipend of £30 a year, is but one of the humbler members of the community. Thus it is not in this or in any other respect a country of extremes. The Catalan, with all his Southern blood, is like a deep pool in the volatile sea of France; and though a loyal Frenchman as far as Cap Cerbère, his innermost nature is moved by hidden springs, which are not those of Gaul.

Returning to our village *place*, here beside the *mairie* is that best of French institutions, the Government school, one wing of it for boys, the other for girls. It is a daily pleasure seeing all the small population sedately on its way to receive the quite admirable elementary education of France, each child in its black gown and with its satchel or strap of books. When school is over they come pouring tumultuously out, and for a moment the *place* is like a noisy rookery in spring. The first time I met the schoolmaster he was half-way up on a ladder in his orchard on the hillside, sedulously plucking the ripening pears. I had often admired his terraces in white bloom in the previous April, and I now asked him if any of the fruit was for sale. He said it was already sold to a wholesale buyer in Paris, "but," he added with the urbanity of his people, "I could let you have a basket or two at the wholesale price of 35 centimes the kilo." He gave me a number in a basket lined with cloth to prevent their being

bruised, and a little later he received me in his rooms in the *mairie*, in his little frugal *salon*, with its bare brown-tiled floor and its neat bookcase in the corner. Presently his wife came in. She is the schoolmistress. Both have now served for twenty-five years, and, though still in early middle age, they are about to retire on a pension. They own the terraced orchard near the school, which now yields them at an annual outlay of 200 francs, something like 6,000 kilos of fruit each year. It must in its way be an almost priceless possession to this man of refined temperament, who for so many hours each day is immersed within the school-house. He gives me the impression of having lived a quiet and tranquil existence. He and his wife must long have enjoyed a perfect immunity from financial cares, for their income has been assured. Yet they must always have had to exercise the care and economy which give a zest to the least eventful of lives. These quiet lives that move within strictly defined limits are perhaps happier than our own.

Old people here in Vernet live to a great age. There is Isidore Llopet, the Crimean veteran and Garde Champêtre of 84, who still carries his robust and formidable figure manfully up the steep hill to his small house in the village, or sits on a winter's morning reading his *Daily Independent* on a cold stone wall that would speedily put an end to more sophisticated people. This fine old soldier went all through the Crimea, and is full of reminiscences of Canrobert and the Maréchal St. Arnaud and of the English who fought side by side with him at Inkermann. He has a pension from his soldiering days of 700 francs a year, a white-haired waxen-faced old wife who is frail with years, and a daughter who pats him on the cheek when she brings him his paper, and, after the manner of old maids, preserves in a little tin box, with forget-me-nots on the lid, a collection of old ball programmes and other souvenirs that go far back in the ephemeral history of Vernet-les-Bains and its casino. But Llopet Isidore, as he calls himself, is not by any means the oldest inhabitant. This honour belongs to Monsieur Daudet, who was born in 1817, is still in excellent health, and has been content to look out upon the *place* of Vernet for ninety-four years.

It is not a beautiful outlook, and yet, as the reader has probably inferred, it is full of human interest, for everyone comes sooner or later to the *place*. Here the travelling tinker unyokes his caravan and plies his fascinating trade. All the worn and soiled utensils of the village are brought here and laid in a black chaos by his side, to emerge in orderly rows, shining and resplendent, with the faces of youth. The tinker knows no pause during the hours of his toil. Long usage has taught him that perfection of manual skill which, whenever one meets it, as in the unerring brush-work of a Velasquez or the dexterous blade strokes of a Moung. So peeling bamboos in a Burmese jungle, fills one with a sense of destiny and fate. While this swift transformation is in progress, the tinker's child slumbers in a hammock under the caravan, the tinker's dog keeps a jealous and watchful eye on the world of strangers, and his wife makes ready the midday meal. Here to-day and gone to-morrow, the life of this rover is the very antithesis to that of Monsieur Daudet, who has scarcely moved for close upon a century.

Near where the tinker sits is the public weighing machine, and across this little strip of swaying iron there passes many a cart laden with hay as sweet and as green in January as it was in June, or brown litter for the apple orchards, or smooth chestnut faggots cut in the Valley of Casteil. It is of never-failing interest to see the long teams of big horses led by a little donkey, to hear the "yeep, yeep" of the carter, the crack of his long whip, the jingling of the harness-bells, as the wheels grind over and pause on the narrow way.

Under the bronze profile of Madame la République across the way, the village fountain gushes from year's end to year's end, and all day long the girls come here to fill their Catalan waterpots, as women have done from time immemorial all over the East. The Catalan *porro*, with its two spouts, is next of kin to the Spanish *bota*, which came long since out of Ur in the Chaldees, when "Abraham turned out the mother of the Arabians, whose descendants brought its usage into Spain." The most characteristic of sights here, as in all Catalonia and Aragon, is to see the drinker lift his *porro*, and let the water or the wine fall from a distance into his mouth,

never touching the spout with his lips. Here is an ancient usage of the road, a relic of days when cups and glasses were scarce.

Another old practice, which is scarcely in keeping with the modern airs of Vernet, is the slaughtering of the great hogs of the Cerdagne that come down here, as they did of old, when Martial almost smacked his lips over their excellent flavour, in verse. Every householder in Vernet, who can do so, cures his own ham. The hog bought, his windpipe is slit, and his great carcass is laid in a boiling trough, round which the friends of the owner assemble with neighbourly zeal. The cobbled drain down the *place* runs with the scarlet life-blood. The ceremony is soon over—a page, and an ugly one, from the primitive life.

In the *place*, also, you will see the mattress-man with his machine restoring life to the mattresses of his fellow citizens. It is an interesting and, in its way, an admirable vocation, for which we should be very much the better in England; but its present representative, Monsieur Py, is a little ashamed of it. He keeps a hairdresser's shop as well, and that means a higher stratum of social life. He is a worthy and industrious man, with a *Curé* for a brother, a hard-working wife, a small son who lathers his father's customers when he is not at school, and a pretty little girl of five who may be seen on summer days, when the dust is blowing, spraying water from the fountain before her father's door to keep it sweet and cool. The whole family, you see, must take their share of toil. The man is well informed, with clear and decisive views on Church and State. "What we want in France," he tells me, "is a republic, no doubt about that; but we could do with a better one."

Hard by his house, where an old niche in the wall enshrines a Virgin, placed here in 1625, when Vernet belonged to Spain and acknowledged a King for her master, the steep main street of the village climbs to the church and château above. Here all that is new and pretentious in Vernet is left behind. One passes at once into the mediæval life, with all its disabilities but all its charm. Here, as if by magic, one is assailed at every turn by the picturesque: the blacksmith's forge, with its overhanging vine and glowing hearth;

HEMP SHOE MAKER

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the cobbler's booth, where three antique men toil behind a window, half concealed; the carpenter's shop, where the white shavings lie like foam; the humble café, with its air as of a bygone day. The houses, though seemingly crude and primitive, have many accessories that lend them distinction, while adding to the daily happiness of their owners. Here are high balconies, sheltered from the wind, shaded by vines and beautiful with the cool clustering fruit in summer, warm and sunlit in winter; quiet old courtyards stored with brown faggots; haylofts yellow with fodder for the cattle; barred hutches full of rabbits nibbling cabbage leaves with a dainty precision; cages of canaries and other singing birds hung against the old grey walls; gorgeous parrots and pink cockatoos perched in the sun; small round holes in the rough doorways for the exit of the domestic cat.

Here at all hours there is life in a minor key. The motors hoot and scatter their impious dust down there along the "Boulevard," carrying a restless world on its wanderings to and fro; but here the saddle-mule climbs slowly up the narrow streets, and old people sit peacefully on their balconies in the dappled light. As late as the end of November you will see them sitting here, under the purple fruit, while the noble wintry mass of the Canigou gleams and glitters afar off against the blue.

At the top of the village stands the old brown church of St. Saturnin with its soaring campanile, and beside it is the old château of Vernet. Both have stood here for 1,100 years. The church is of immense solidity, and must always have been meant, like its neighbour, to stand a siege. It has a rough old wooden door with iron nails, which bears the trace of centuries upon it, and within, although its interior has been painfully restored, there are some very old remnants of its past. Amongst these there is a carved stone capital of the Visigoths of the eighth century, and a silver reliquary containing part of the arm of the patron saint, of whom it is written that he died lashed to a maddened bull that was goaded over the edge of the Capitol. Some of those who kneel here on Sunday can see afar off, through the narrow southern loopholes of the church, the purple slopes and snow-white shoulders of the Canigou.

The château has endured more of vicissitude than the church. The greater part of it is new and of little importance, having recently been restored by M. Clément de la Croix, its present owner; but portions of the northern wall are of immense solidity, and date back to the very beginning of things at Vernet. Inside, the natural rock juts out of the wall in one place, in a rude primitive manner which is illustrative of the original character of the building; and passing from an anteroom into the lower chamber of the tower, through an archway cut in the wall, one realizes its massive strength. From the first floor of the tower there are superb views of the valley, and of the snow-white summits of the Tres Estellas and the Canigou. The newer portion of the château contains a very beautiful window, brought here from Villefranche. Its slender columns and pointed arches have an air as of Byzantium or Venice, and remind one of the seafaring days of the Catalans, when they trafficked with the East.

Beyond church and château, and apart from the warm life, the human touch, the daily needs of the village, lie the dead of Vernet. Their resting-place has been well chosen. Here in the spring-time, at this season of an universal resurrection, the pink-white bloom from the apple orchards is blown about the graves, the iris and the lilac fling their purple, and the violets make a rich and scented carpet over the humblest bones. From the centre, dark cypresses taper up to the blue sky, and over all, in sublime and majestic glory, rise the great outlines of the Catalan Olympus. No sound breaks the quiet stillness here, save the deep humming of the bees amongst the arbutus bushes, the music of running water, and the tinkle of bells where the cattle graze in the meadows of the valley. It is a place of infinite peace, to which the old and the weary cannot be sorry to look forward.

CHAPTER II

THE ROAD TO CASTEIL

VERNET

In every country there is some road that attracts one more than any other, by its natural beauty, or its great age, or its rich human associations, or only, perhaps, because it lies before one's door and ministers to one's daily needs, and so in time becomes the highway of one's joys and sorrows. All of these qualities belong in full measure to this strip of road that runs up the valley from Vernet to Casteil. Though rough in places, it is set in many soft passages of rustic beauty. Here are lush meadows like a velvet carpet, blackberries by the wayside, apple-trees bending under their weight of ruddy fruit, and waving fields of corn and millet. The river runs bubbling with life beside it, half hidden in summer amidst the foliage of the Spanish chestnuts and alders which live by its bounty.

All about it rise the great mountains, purple shot with green, or white, as in autumn, with the gold glowing like fire through the snow. In spring it is a paradise of vernal delights, when the white bloom is on the cherry-trees, and the orchards are a carpet of pink under the blue furrow of the sky.

But at all seasons of the year it is most beautiful of an evening, for then it becomes the very haunt and resting-place of Peace. Here, while the sunlight still lingers on the abbey, slowly receding across the organ-like heights and fluted pinnacles of the Pyrenees like the last notes of a distant anthem, one takes part as it were in some mystic chant of Nature, of which such faint echoes alone can reach the earth

in places so ultimate and apart and exquisite as this. One is seized then with the sense of sharing, by enchantment, in some great Spacial act of worship, which is filling elsewhere, with its indescribable ritual, the very universe itself.

Nor are human associations lacking; for life ever moves upon its surface, and one can never travel upon it without meeting the mountain folk going about their humble avocations. Here the ox-waggons come swaying from side to side, their blue-coated drivers standing up within and calling to the brown cattle; here the small children steal along, with their pockets full of chestnuts or their lips stained with blackberry juice; and here the old people, who were once like them, but have now trod its surface for seventy or eighty years, come slowly toiling up from Vernet with heavy packages in their hands, their days all but accomplished. Here the muleteer goes clattering by; the baker's boy comes singing to the morning, his hands in his pockets and the great loaves on his head; the woodcutter marches forward with his shining axe and heavy load. In the meadows by the roadside the cattle pasture in spring, in the care of many a beautiful girl, with her hair neatly coiled over her ears, *simplex munditiis*, and her frock already arranged for the evening dance in the village; in the brown fields won from the stony soil the ploughman drives his cattle with loud voice; upon the mountain-sides the shepherd plays his flute, while his flock wander under the care of his faithful dog; and at times, as though to remind one that life is not altogether a pastoral idyll, such immemorial charms as these are broken by a sudden subterranean thunder as of volcanic forces, where the miners toil in the bowels of the hard encompassing hills.

There must be many a mountain road in the Pyrenees which can rival in some of these details the old road to Casteil, but few which can lay claim like it to a place in history; for the destination of this road is the abbey of St. Martin of the Canigou, which for 800 years was famous throughout the Catalan world. Up this road, which can have altered little since then, the Count Wilfred rode with his knights and men-at-arms on a November day in the year 1009, when the Bishop of Elne came to consecrate his

OLD VERNET—SUMMER (*page* 66)

OLD VERNET—WINTER (*page* 66)

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new foundation ; along it, with all the solemn pomp and devotion of the mediæval Church, were borne upon many a critical occasion the bones of the blessed St. Gualderic, bringer of rain to a parched and famished land ; here, many a mitred Abbot, many a shaven monk, has travelled on his way from the abbey to the château of old Vernet, which still glows like an enchanting vision at sunset, at the far end of the gorge. Along this road the Kings of Majorca came on their visits to the royal abbey ; the last Abbot of St. Martin's took his way, not knowing it would end for him on a Parisian scaffold ; and in 1793 the Revolutionary storm broke here with its wonted violence. And now, all said and done, it is become once more a little road up a mountain valley, apt for the seeker after sunlight on a winter's morning ; a road for a Sabbath day's journey ; a haunt of the wayfaring English, who bring with them men who have fought and travelled and made history all over the world, and are yet content to sit here in its sunlight and bask in its quiet peace.

Casteil itself is a little village of 200 souls, the last human settlement in this Pyrenean valley, as it climbs upwards to the flanks of the Canigou. An incurious person might live within a mile of it and never know of its existence, so carefully is it hidden away at this far end of a narrowing gorge. Its name implies that it began life as a fortified outwork of some kind, sealing this end of the valley ; and in the earliest mention of it, in the year 966, it is referred to by Count Seniofred as his *Castrum Sancti Martini,* inherited by him from his father.

But from the earliest times that human life moved in these valleys there must have been someone here ; for it satisfies all the primitive needs, of water and wood and cultivable soil ; trout in its clear pools ; and game, the izard and the wild-boar, upon its mountain-sides. Moreover, it is well adapted for defence, and in the last resort for retreat into the wild fastnesses of the Canigou.

Its recorded history is that of an humble appanage of the great abbey which soars above it. For close on 800 years it was content to fill this vocation. The Abbot was its lord and master, and the Casteil peasant was here to serve his

needs. And then came that marvellous transformation which is curtly known as the French Revolution. Already in 1786 the abbey had been closed, and the carved marble tomb in which there lay the remains of Count Wilfred, its founder, had been brought down to the humble little village chapel of Casteil. Then, when the Revolution came, the peasant rushed in with his axe and his hammer and smashed the effigy of the great Count into road metal, flung open the marble cover of the tomb, and scattered the noble dust under his feet, to show that now and at last HE was the master. And so it was that poor Casteil became the heir to the glory of the past.

Its rough chapel displays amidst the rude stonework of its dwarfed tower four of the marble columns of the abbey cloisters; in the wall of an adjoining farmhouse are embedded old mediæval faces in stone, stolen from the same source; and here and there in dark interiors, and amidst the litter of mules and cattle, lie scattered other fragments of the abbey. In old chests, stored away here with peasant secretiveness, such as are curious may still find deeds and documents which tell how the Abbots as temporal lords and Grand Seigneurs exercised their jurisdiction.

In the little chapel itself there is still the empty sarcophagus in which lay the bones of Count Wilfred and the Countess Elizabeth, his wife; and in a small wooden receptacle there is still preserved the piece of silken embroidery wrought by the Countess Guisla, in green and violet and yellow, 900 years ago. Its original receptacle of carved wood bearing the arms of Count Wilfred, with the inscription, "Given by the Countess Guisla to St. Martin of the Canigou, the year 1018," has disappeared within the past eight years. The wonder is that this slight thing, wrought by a woman's hand, should have survived at all. It is shown, to anyone who cares to see it, by the farmer's wife who keeps the key of the chapel, and is so often and so roughly handled that it must soon wear away.

It was lent once to some ladies at Vernet, who in their desire to copy the stitch undid considerable portions of it; and the fine linen on which it is embroidered is torn in places. Yet it is a notable piece of work, and it is a

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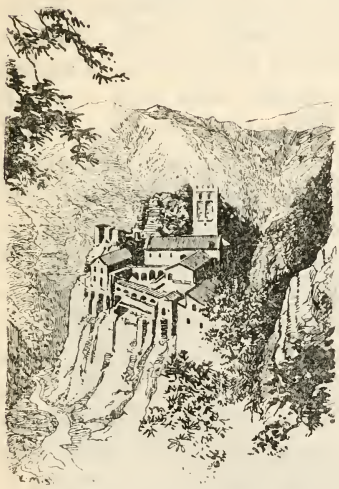
pleasure on entering the damp village church to see it glowing in the sun, its colours perfect, and the name of the great lady who made it as bright and legible as on the day she put her needle through it for the last time. Perhaps you can picture her folding it up with a little sigh of pleasure as the pious work was done.

Beside it there is a crimson silk canopy, of the year 1641, bearing the arms of Catalonia and a figure of St. John the Baptist; and in the farmhouse there is kept an old silver *ostensoir*, with a crystal receptacle for the sacred Host.

CHAPTER III

ST. MARTIN DU CANIGOU; THE LIFE-HISTORY OF A CATALAN ABBEY



ST. MARTIN DU CANIGOU, NEAR VERNET-LES-BAINS

THE beginnings of the Abbey of St. Martin of the Canigou date back to the earliest years of the eleventh century; and, in spite of vicissitude and disaster and the lapse of so great a space of time, there survives to this day a marvellous record of its origin and the fate that befell it during the intervening centuries. Amongst the faded archives of Villefranche, that townlet of Vauban's by the wayside, which so many a traveller passes by as unworthy of notice, there is still preserved an old vellum of the year 1007, recording the grant of lands at Vernet, at Llupia, and at Millas, to the end that a primitive little chapel of St. Martin on the slopes of the Canigou might be converted into a Benedictine abbey and the abode of a community of pious men. Even earlier than this there is record of pious endowments in favour of the little chapel, high up there amidst the mountain solitudes,

and one cannot tell for how many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of years before some act of worship had been performed in this remote sanctuary. The world is so much older than we think; and the green pastures up there must have tempted the shepherd lad, fluting to his Pan, long years before the magnanimous St. Martin was born. Some early Phœnician trader may have been led by the glorious snows of the Canigou to leave his galley by the sea's edge and adventure with a few chosen companions up this valley on a summer day; and the Roman settler, refreshing his limbs in the luxurious waters that have gushed out here from the bowels of the mountains since human time began, must often have climbed amidst these solitudes.

Here, at any rate, in the year 1000 stood a little chapel of Christ, while down in the sunlit valley at Corneilla there rose the château of the Counts of the Cerdagne, inhabited at that period by Wilfred of Ria, Count of Berga, of the Cerdagne, the Conflent, and the Capcir. This Wilfred, whose name has been immortalized by the abbey he founded, was the son of Count Oliba Cabreta, who with his wife Ermengarde made a vow to the blessed St. Mary of Ripoll, in the year 967, that they would endow her monastery there with lands if she would vouchsafe them offspring. The Virgin was propitious, and seven children were born to them, of whom Wilfred, the eldest, succeeded his father. Of the Count Oliba Cabreta it is said that he stammered so badly that he was fain to stamp his foot four or five times like a goat before he could get out a word—hence his name of Cabreta. He was none the less a valiant soldier, and withal a successful man, for he fought a great and sanguinary battle with his neighbour, the Count of Carcassonne, and won the territory of Capcir. He died also in the odour of holiness and peace, which it is not given to all men to compass. Yielding to the influence of his friend St. Romuald, he became, like his fellow-penitent, the Doge Pierre Orseolo of Venice, a monk of St. Michael at Cuxa two years before his death, and left his young children and the government of his country to his wife Ermengarde.

Wilfred in due course inherited his father's honours, and with his wife, the Countess Guisla, often visited from his

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PYRENEAN CATTLE (*page* 76)

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château at Corneilla the little chapel of St. Martin. The memory of his father's piety was still fresh in his mind, and at Cuxa, over the brow of the hill which shelters Corneilla from easterly winds, there had already stood for close upon 200 years the great abbey of St. Michael, in which his father had died, and of which his brother was now the spiritual head. These influences were not lost upon him, and Count Wilfred resolved to emulate his ancestors by the foundation of another abbey in his own lovely valley of Vernet. There is nothing to prove that in this purpose Count Wilfred was inspired by other than pious motives, by his devotion to the Church, and by his gratitude to Heaven for safe deliverance from the crisis of the Millennium, when all men believed the world would be destroyed; yet there lingers to this day amongst the people of these hills the belief that the Abbey of St. Martin owes its origin to a great act of expiation for the murder of his brother's son. This version of it, indeed, can never die so long as the Catalans retain their tongue, for it is enshrined in the verse of Jacinto Verdaguer, whose poem "Lo Canigou" is a tribute to the glory of the great mountain. The deed is said by some to have been done in the Church of St. Martin of the Valley near Puigcerda, by others in the ancient ruined chapel of St. Martin which preceded the abbey.

The first stones of the new abbey were laid on July 2, 1007, by a small band of monkish workmen sent over from Cuxa, under the supervision of the Benedictine architect Sclua; and so well was it inspired that within two and a half years the new abbey church was ready for consecration. The Bishop of Elne came up to dedicate it, and the very words he used on this occasion are on record, so kindly has time spared the origins, if it has destroyed so much of the fabric of the abbey.

"I, Oliba, Bishop of the See of Elne, I have come to the place named Canigo, to consecrate the church dedicated here in honour of St. Martin, Bishop and Confessor, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of St. Michael the Archangel; which men call the Monastery of Canigo, built on this mountain by Sclua, priest and monk of the Convent of St. Michael, under the orders of the Lord Wilfred, Count

by the grace of God, and of his wife Guisla, who have enriched the abbey with sacred vessels and ornaments, and plentifully endowed it with lands, on this the fourth day of the Ides of November, 1009."

Twenty gentlemen of noble birth contributed to the new endowment, whose lands extended as far as Molitg and Vinça in the Valley of the Tet.

The traveller who pauses amidst these solitudes, over which some 900 years of varying fortune have passed since then, may well recall in imagination this first notable day in the history of the abbey, when the Bishop of Elne, himself a feudal lord with his retinue of armed men, and the Count Wilfred, and his brother the mitred Abbot of Cuxa, and a great concourse of knights and monks, came crowding up the rough pathways that alone connected this wild spot with the outer world. The times were of the roughest, and piety and violence went hand in hand together. The country was harassed by private feuds and incessant discords, in which priest and laymen were alike involved; and no one could be certain that even so peaceful an occasion as the consecration of a new house of God would pass without some violent outburst. The Church, it is true, endeavoured to ameliorate the rude habits of the age by establishing the "Truce of God," which extended from the hour of Nones on Saturday to the hour of Prime on Monday morning. During these hours men were forbidden, under pain of anathema and excommunication, to attack each other under whatever provocation. At a great Council held at Toulouges, thirty years after the foundation of St. Martin's Abbey, at which all the Bishops and nobles of Catalonia were present, it was decreed that no one should commit any violence in churches, cemeteries, or other sacred places that were not fortified, or attack a monk or unarmed cleric, or anyone going to or returning from church or walking with women; or despoil widows, or burn the homes of peasants and carry away their young cattle under six months old. Yet no sooner had the Council broken up than its president, the Archbishop Wilfred, fell upon the Viscount of Narbonne with all his men-at-arms. Monasteries continued to be pillaged, and clerics guilty of malversation, resisted to the

death with arms in their hands. Archdeacons wrongfully possessed of property could only be brought to reason by the Bishop's closing all the churches in his diocese. And the pious Count Wilfred himself, who founded this new abbey of St. Martin, had no scruples about bribing the Vicomte of Narbonne and the Marquis de Gothie with a sum of 100,000 sols, to secure the nomination of his son, aged nine, to the archbishopric of Narbonne; while this precocious prelate, in spite of excommunication and all the thunders of the Church, retained his see for sixty-three years, during the course of which he sold to the Jews his cathedral plate and sacred vessels, to obtain a like sum for the purchase of the See of Urgell for his younger brother. And yet the Crusades were near at hand, and deeds of earnest piety and self-devotion were almost as frequent as those of violence.

Such were the times and such the men, on this day of November, 1009, when the new abbey was formally consecrated.

Two years later the Pope, Sergius IV., issued a Bull in its favour, and this, the great charter of the abbey, written in Latin on papyrus, still exists in its pristine perfection in the old library at Perpignan, where any curious person may look upon it. For 775 years it was the prized possession of the abbey, the most valued of its title-deeds. One can think of it lying there in the strong muniment-room, carefully guarded from all but the most privileged eyes, and brought forth only from time to time in support of the claims of the abbey, when these were in dispute. Happily, it was removed from the abbey before the storm of the Revolution broke upon these devoted walls, and thus, fragile as it is, it has worn better than the carved marble and the sculptured stone which bore it company. In 1842 it was sent to Paris on its first long journey since it travelled here from Rome in 1011, and facsimiles were made of it, of which copies were sent to the great museums of the world.

In accordance with the terms of this Bull, the monks proceeded to elect their own Abbot, naming the architect Sclua, to whom the Abbot of Cuxa transferred the authority he had hitherto exercised. Fresh endowments poured in, now that the abbey was placed in a position of complete

independence; and its material prosperity being thus assured, the Count Wilfred cast about for a spiritual endowment that would give it sanctity in accordance with the spirit of the times.

A small band of monks and several armed laymen set out to fulfil his pious purpose. "Creatures of the night," writes the old chronicler, "they went like thieves, though noble and holy men, along the most unfrequented tracks. They stole into towns and villages unperceived, and, wherever in cathedral or village church some saintly remains were enshrined, they tried the great doors and the resisting locks to effect an entrance. For it were vain, they well knew, to hope to attain their end except by theft." At last, in the pleasant land of Toulouse, in the little village of Viéville, they came upon a neglected church whose doors gaped upon their rusty hinges. Here, within reach of their hands, lay the remains of the pious St. Gualderic, who had died a common labourer, and was buried, like other poor folk, in a humble and unmarked corner of the cemetery. But a just God wished otherwise. So many miracles were performed about the nameless grave that the Church could no longer ignore its occupant. His precious remains were taken within, and interred beside the high-altar of Viéville. Here they were found by Count Wilfred's emissaries, who, entering in at dead of night, made haste to uncover the tomb. But the stone slab that lay upon it resisted all their efforts. Exhausted and in despair—for the day was at hand—they threw themselves upon the pitying goodness of God, and, invoking the saint, promised him, if he would yield, a far more magnificent resting-place. Whereupon the great stone of the sarcophagus itself moved out of place, the sacred bones were hastily collected, and the whole party set off with all available speed for the Roussillon border. But their anxieties were not yet at an end. As they sat by the wayside, under the shelter of a little hill, to arrange in decent order the stolen relics and to partake of some much-needed refreshment, a sudden tempest overtook them and carried away a finger of the saint. This the priest of Viéville, warned of what had happened in a dream, recovered as he hastened after them in pursuit.

THE FEUDAL CASTLE OF HUSSON

NEW BRIDGE OVER THE TECH

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Count Wilfred's men were not of a mind to delay; they pressed forward across the border, and soon, entering the country of the Conflent, they rested for the night at Vinça in the house of a pious woman, who offered them hospitality and pressed them with a hundred questions. Overjoyed at their success, they could not keep from her the story of their miraculous adventure. They told their amazed hostess of all that had befallen them, and made over to her for greater safety the casket containing the bones. Deep sleep soon lay upon the eyes of all in the house save one, a poor crippled girl who had overheard the wonderful story. Stealing down to the room in which the casket lay, she prayed to Heaven that she might be cured through the intercession of the blessed saint.

Her prayer was answered, and when her mistress came down in the morning, and saw what a miracle had been wrought, she opened the casket and stole for herself a precious fragment. But this theft did not go unpunished, for a flame sprang from the relic and burnt all that there was within the house.

The memory of these events has not faded from the minds of the inhabitants of Vinça. The house in which Count Wilfred's messengers were received still exists, hard by the ruins of the great gate of Vinça; the image of St. Gualderic is enshrined in an adjoining niche. The sacred relic is still preserved, and once a year, on the feast-day of the saint, the dwindling congregation of the faithful march in a solemn procession through the little town, and sing an ancient litany in honour of the saint.

Meanwhile, to return to our story, the greater part of the relics reached St. Martin's in safety. The news of their coming spread quickly before them, and the entire country-side crowded along the highways to see them pass. As they entered the borders of Vernet and Casteil, the monks of the abbey thronged down with banners and torches, the Abbot leading them with the abbey cross upheld before him; the voice of the increasing multitude rose up to heaven in psalms and anthems, and as the sacred relics passed, wonderful miracles were wrought: the dumb spoke, the deaf heard, and the blind rejoiced in the sight of the beautiful world

about them. The abbey was filled with joy, and the good Count Wilfred knew that his efforts, inspired by faith, had been found worthy in the sight of Heaven.

A year later the whole land of Roussillon was visited by one of the recurring droughts to which it is liable. The rivers ran dry, the fields lay untilled, and every blade of grass and every flower by the wayside was scorched in the untempered sun. Then the fainting people came and begged the Abbot to bring down into their midst the bones of the blessed St. Gualderic, who in his lifetime had toiled like them in the fields. The Abbot consented, and the bones were borne in procession down the long valley to Prades, and thence to the neighbouring abbey of St. Michael at Cuxa, where thousands gathered round them in prayer. The rain, which had so long held off, fell in abundance upon the parched land, and thus was established a custom which prevailed for centuries in Roussillon. Upon each subsequent occasion that the intercession of St. Gualderic was needed, the Consuls of Perpignan sent a formal demand to the Abbey of St. Martin; which being complied with, the relics were carried with great ceremony to an altar by the banks of the Tet, or, *if it had run dry*, to Sainte Marie, by the sea's edge.

In the year 1031 the Count Wilfred, tired of the world and its vanities, stripped himself of all secular cares, and lived a peaceful life between his château at Corneilla and his Abbey of St. Martin. In 1035 he made over his great patrimony to his sons, and in 1043 definitely entered the abbey as a monk. Six years later, on July 31, he died, and to every Benedictine house in Europe a special messenger was sent charged with old Latin eulogies of the dead Count, who had given up all that the world could offer—wife, and children, and power, and land—to become a poor servant of Christ. His body was laid in the strange sepulchre, dug with his own hands out of the solid rock, in which he had already slept for many a penitential night. One may still see it at the foot of the tower of the abbey, lying empty and open to the sky.

GUIFREDI COMITIS CINERES MONACHIQUE BEATI
ARTIFICISQUE LOCI CONTINETISTE LAPIS.
FINE SUO JULIUS HUIC FINEM, MILLE SUB ANNIS
BISQUATUOR QUINIS CONTULIS ATQUE NOVEM.

Such was the inscription graven on the sepulchral stone, and often seen and noted by the careful annalist of each succeeding age, but now lost, and perhaps embedded in the hearth of some peasant's cottage in Casteil, or it may be, put to some even baser use.

In 1332 the bones of Wilfred, and of Elizabeth the wife of his old age, were united after the lapse of 283 years in one tomb, by the Abbot Berenger de Colomar; and an effigy of the Count in full armour was carved in white marble and placed over it in the abbey church.

The monks were grateful to the founder of their abbey, and it was their custom on each anniversary of his death to cover his tomb with flowers.

All went well with the abbey during the first hundred years of its existence. Its lands increased and were multiplied, its Abbots followed each other in undisputed succession, and its inmates devoted themselves, we are told, to the peaceful arts of the age: the illuminating of rich manuscripts, the cult of letters, and the instruction of the young. But they must have sinned, also, and failed in their duties, for with the death of the Abbot Suniaire in 1110 there set in a period of trial and adversity. For four years no Abbot was elected, and then the Count William Raymond, grandson of Count Wilfred, made over the control of the abbey to the Abbot of La Grasse. For forty-five years the monks of St. Martin had, in violation of the Papal Bull, to endure the dominance of a stranger. If one were to study in detail this episode alone, and the events to which it gave rise, it would display with remarkable fidelity the whole texture of society at this period, and the curious relations subsisting between Church and State. It must suffice to say here that it was not till the Queen of Aragon herself intervened in favour of the Abbey of St. Martin that this long violation of its rights was brought to an end. Emboldened by her protection, and at the instigation of the Bishop of Elne, the monks proceeded to elect their own Abbot, and, by way of compromise, they chose the Sacristan Major of the Abbey of Ripoll. The new Count Berenger, of the Cerdagne and Barcelona, confirmed this election, and requested the Abbot

of La Grasse to accept it as an accomplished fact. The Abbot lost his temper, and launched an interdict on the Abbey of St. Martin and all the churches dependent on it. He wrote at the same time in angry and petulant terms to the Count and the Archbishop of Narbonne. The Count retorted by requesting him to put an immediate end to the scandal, and called upon him to remove his interdict, unless he wished to have him for an adversary instead of a friendly intermediary. But the Abbot continuing obstinate, he convoked at Barcelona a special Council, consisting of the Archbishop of Narbonne, the Suffragans of Tarragona, the Abbot of La Grasse, and all the magnates of the State, whose decision was now formally given in favour of St. Martin's. The monks of La Grasse, furious at this conclusion, determined on an act of force and violence that was quite in keeping with the character of the age. Escorted by a large body of armed supporters, they fell upon the Abbey of St. Martin by night, forced an entrance, attacked all those within who made any effort at resistance, severely wounded and imprisoned many, and drove the rest from the precincts.

The Count of Barcelona, a great and powerful noble, saw no remedy but to appeal to the Papal See. While the issue was still uncertain he died, and was succeeded by his son, Alphonso II., King of Aragon. The Pope gave his decision in favour of the monks of St. Martin, recognized the Abbot elected by them, and forbade the Abbot and monks of La Grasse, under pain of excommunication, from interfering any further in the affairs of Count Wilfred's abbey. Notwithstanding even this, the matter was not finally adjusted till the close of 1171, when Peter IV., Abbot of St. Martin, journeyed to Rome and personally appealed to the Pope. A Bull was then issued which at length, after sixty-one years, restored to the community of St. Martin the right expressly granted to it at its foundation by Pope Sergius IV., of electing its own head.

Thus the first great trouble of the new abbey was composed. But the times were rude, the Roussillon was ever a cockpit of contending forces, and, though the remote locality of the abbey kept it out of the centre of the storm, it was

not to be expected that it could always escape the fate of the country of which it formed an intimate part. In the year 1220 there was open war between William of Monçade, Count of Bearn, and Nuño Sancho, Count of the Roussillon, who, to the bitter mortification of his rival, had been appointed Regent of Aragon during the minority of the infant King James I. The Lords Berenger of Espira and Adhemar of St. Ferreol, with their beaten troops, took refuge at the abbey, and were, in a bad hour for the Abbot Peter William, hospitably received by him. Count William of the Roussillon came down upon the abbey breathing vengeance, but so far relaxed as to limit it to a heavy fine and the stern expression of his displeasure. These troubles killed the Abbot, who died a few months later.

His successor, the great Abbot Bernard, we are told, lightened a little the burden of the ascetic life by adding to the fare of his monks an egg on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, and an extra piece of bread. These austerities had meanwhile given St. Martin's so good a repute, while its neighbour of Cuxa was so much in disgrace, that the Pope ordered the Abbot of St. Martin to administer the Abbey of Cuxa as well.

An event was, however, now at hand which was to draw the abbey once more into the secular turmoil of the times. Hitherto all the country of the Roussillon, or the Pyrénées-Orientales, had been governed by great lords, subject to the Kings of Aragon or France, whose authority was afar off. It was now to have a King of its own and in its midst. The creation of this kingdom of Majorca seemed fraught at the outset with benefit to the abbey, and the Abbot went down to Perpignan to pay his homage to the new King in person. The visit was returned, and for the first time in its history the abbey received a royal guest. We can picture the King coming up in no little state, with his cavalcade of knights and warriors, the grim solitudes echoing to the trumpets of the royal herald and the answering music of the abbey bells; we can see the Abbot in his splendid cope and vestments, the abbey cross borne proudly before him, descending some way to meet the King, the monks in solemn procession behind; and after that the rude hospitality of

this remote place far up in its mountains, and the solemn worship within the dim primitive church. It was a great day for the abbey, but it was fraught with ultimate woe; for in the end the Kings of Majorca were powerless to hold their own against the might of Aragon. The country was distracted by their wars, and in the year 1374 the Infante of Majorca, making one last bid for the throne of his fathers, and angered with the Abbey of St. Martin for its failure in devotion to his cause, fell upon it by night and exacted a severe retribution. The abbey was strongly fortified, and was regarded, with its outlying château at Vernet, as a formidable place of arms; but the Infante came down upon it unexpectedly, by unfrequented mountain paths, and it was unable to make any resistance. The Abbot was very roughly used, several monks were wounded, and the abbey was stripped of all its treasures.

A severe earthquake following upon this disaster, the abbey buildings were greatly shaken, part of the tower and of the church and monastery being thrown to the ground. The Abbot William V. died under the weight of these troubles.

The abbey was sufficiently repaired by July 17, 1433, to be once more habitable; but a report of an officer sent by the Council of Bâle six years later to inspect the abbey shows how heavily it had been afflicted.

Five hundred florins, he declared, were necessary for the repair of the dormitory alone; and a far greater sum for the refectory, the Abbot's quarters, the kitchen, and other buildings destroyed in the earthquake of 1428. The capital cost of the necessary repairs was assessed by him at fifteen years' revenue of the monastery. The Abbot was so poor that he had not the wherewithal to entertain a page or a valet; notwithstanding which he had to give two monks and four beneficed priests bread and wine daily, to pray for the repose of the soul of the Count Wilfred.

The abbey, like all the country round, had suffered terribly. Its lands lay waste and desolate, its income was reduced to half, and so heavy had been the toll of the Majorcan wars that half the old population had disappeared. At Casteil but two humble peasants survived in the ruined hamlet.

A PICNIC

A FOUNTAIN OF THE MADONNA

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Little by little these vicissitudes were overcome, and some measure of prosperity returned to St. Martin. In 1442 its neighbour at Cuxa, once more fallen into disgrace, was placed under its jurisdiction, and in 1465 valuable privileges were conferred upon it by Louis XI., King of France, the new master of the Roussillon. All these circumstances tended greatly to the amelioration of its fortunes, and for three-quarters of a century it had peace.

Then, in the year 1506, there came into these remote fastnesses a great change that was now sweeping over all the abbeys of France, and was destined to exercise the most pernicious influence upon their fortunes. This was the elaborate system of spoliation known as the Commende, and the first of the new absentee Abbots under this rule was the Cardinal Aloys of Aragon. His successor in 1554 carried the doctrine of plurality to greater lengths. Already Archbishop of Arboré, he was made Cardinal by Pope Alexander VI., and Bishop of Elne, in which capacity he assumed as of right the government of the abbey. At his death the abbey, as part of the bishopric of Elne, came under the direct control of the Papal See. The relics of St. Gualderic, the humble farm labourer, which had now for 600 years been the pride of the abbey, were exalted to still greater honours within the abbey; and in 1642, when the Abbot went down to Perpignan to pay homage to Louis XIII., who with an army of 20,000 men was besieging that city, he was requested by the King to send him a fragment of these relics. Placed in a splendid casket, they were carried down with great ceremony and committed to the royal hands. The King's piety did not, however, prevent his annexing the revenues of the abbey on the death of this Abbot. For fifty years no Abbot was appointed, and its fortunes were administered by royal nominees. The abbey fell into ruins, its road was washed away, and the monks degenerated. It was a period of humiliation for the abbey, and of material and spiritual decline.

The saintly relics nevertheless retained their great hold over the Catalan mind, and in May, 1718, when the whole land of the Conflent and the Roussillon was in the grip of a terrible drought, the people remembered the saint who had

once, like themselves, toiled in the fields, and like Moses had struck water from a rock, and made a river he was fording part in twain that he might kneel at the sound of the angelus as it pealed from a neighbouring tower. The city of Perpignan, already in the grip of famine and disease, sent a deputation to the abbey to ask for the presence of the holy relics; and an old document in the archives of the city sets out how they were borne aloft under a pall of crimson velvet, on a gorgeous litter, with a bust of the saint wearing a jewelled crown, all through the land of the Roussillon; and how the stricken people knelt as the relics went by, past Prades and Marquixanes and Vinça and Ille and Millas; returning by Soler, Toulouges and Thuir, that the whole valley might profit by their passing. The good labourer's bones, it seems, prevailed with Heaven, for a bountiful rain fell and the land was saved.

But the end of the abbey, which had in spite of vicissitude weathered so many centuries, was now at hand. Monastic discipline throughout France had been greatly relaxed, and it was resolved by a Council of State that there should, in all the monasteries of the Benedictine Order, be a return to the strict communal life, failing which they should be dissolved. The royal edict enforcing this decision was confirmed by the Pope and endorsed by the Council of Roussillon on August 20, 1772. Twelve years more passed over the doomed abbey, during which the Abbot and monks made representations and appeals to King and Pope without effect. These indicate sufficiently that the great foundation of Count Wilfred was already moribund, and, like the rest of society in France, helplessly awaiting its coming dissolution. On September 4, 1779, a Chapter of the Order assembled at St. Martin's, under the presidency of the last of its Abbots, addressed the King. "For ten years now," they said, "we have been threatened with secularization, or a return to the communal life. As we cannot accept the latter, we ask that the former may be accomplished. We are reduced in number to five aged and infirm persons, too few to discharge our religious duties as a community of monks, too feeble to resist being robbed or murdered by brigands amidst these awful

solitudes. The winters are too severe for such old men as we are. Let us be granted the revenues which appertain to us as members of the abbey, and pass our few remaining years elsewhere in peace." They were even fain to admit, "as His Majesty well knew, that they held their lucrative sinecures as members of noble families, and persons of too slight parts to be able to make a living in any other way."

The end came on September 2, 1783, when a royal officer read before the Abbot and assembled brethren the decree suppressing the monastery and calling upon them forthwith to make over to him all their documents and title-deeds for transmission to Perpignan. The *Curé* of Olette at the same time, as representing the Bishop of Elne, set about an inventory of the sacred possessions of the abbey. Five days later, on September 7, 1783, the entrance of the crypt was walled up, the great door of the abbey was locked, and the precious relics of St. Gualderic were borne, amidst the sobs of all present at this melancholy ceremony, for safety to Villefranche. Three years later the bells of the abbey were sold, the city of Perpignan acquiring all but the largest, which went to Olot in Spain. The altars and other ornaments of the abbey church were distributed amongst the villages of Vernet, Sahorre, Mantet, Marquixanes, and Aureilla, all of which had depended on the abbey. And last of all the mortal remains of Count Wilfred and his wife, the Countess Elizabeth, which had lain here for seven and a half centuries, were carried down and placed in the humble church of Casteil. For the days of the abbey were accomplished.

If I have told this story at some length, it has been from the feeling that the study of such a foundation is like the study of a single human life, marked by the same vicissitudes, the same happy and hopeful beginning, the same tragic close. It is in this light that the history of its nine hundred years is so full of interest.

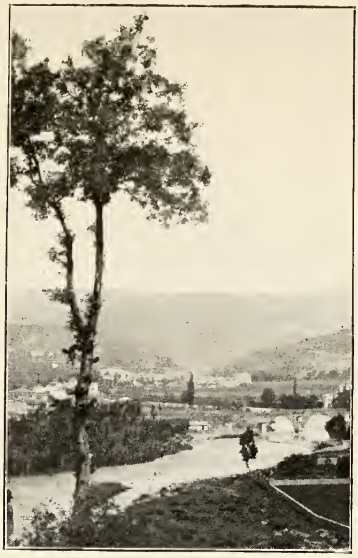
CHAPTER IV

SAHORRE AND PY

VERNET

THERE is a fine wide road from Vernet over the ridge which divides it from its twin valley of Sahorre. It is an ideal road of a winter afternoon, once the ridge is crossed, for the whole of the eastern half of the valley is lit by the sun. From its crest one sees the two valleys sloping down to their junction at Villefranche, green and lively by contrast with the barren walls that shut them in. Here and there are the little villages with their white and yellow houses and old grey church towers; and straight down both valleys run the white-ribbon-like highways. At Sahorre there is space for wide fields of millet and apple orchards, and an air of great peace and plenty lies over the whole of this charming countryside. But for one startling villa which someone has built here on *l'art nouveau* lines, the place is stamped with the repose and the rude simplicity of a Pyrenean hamlet, far from the traffic of the world. French is little spoken, and Vernet, with its casino and grand hotels, seems a hundred miles away. The church, almost hidden away in the midst of the rough houses and the narrow lanes, is of primitive outline, with a low door that yields only to a massive iron key that was forged here centuries ago by a blacksmith of the valley, from the iron of the neighbouring mountains. The houses that stand about it have little sunny balconies and pergolas chequered with the light and shade of their overhanging vines, heavy as late as November with big purple bunches of grapes.

Here one may see the travelling cobbler going from house to house, blowing a shrill tune on his little brass trumpet,



BESORA

IN THE VALLEY OF SAHORRE (*page* 94)

and inviting householders to give him their foot-wear to mend. Strung in a circle about his shoulders are the shoes he has collected, in every stage of dissolution. While he stands here and blows his trumpet, a woman washes clothes in the channel which runs along by the side of the street, and a pair of grey goslings stand marvelling at his music. The man and his surroundings belong to a bygone age.

And yet even Sahorre is moving towards modernity, under the influence of its ambitious neighbour. No longer, it would seem, do the village folk carry their tortoises to the church to be blessed, and thereafter ground into a sovereign powder for their sheep; no longer are their cattle given olive branches on Palm Sunday as a charm against the sorceresses; nor are their fields made fruitful with a pine bough blessed by the *Curé* on St. Peter's Day. Even at Sahorre progress is afoot, and the owner of the white art villa sends the fruit of this little valley to Parisian restaurants, thus linking it infallibly with the great world.

Beyond Sahorre, the valley with its little river of Py, fed from the upland snows, rapidly contracts, and the mountains come down dark and iron-bound to the very brink of its waters. It were hard to imagine anything more savagely wild and remote than this harsh valley, hidden away here in this defile of the Pyrenees. The whole sweep of the mountain-side is bare from base to summit, a chaos of shattered and tumultuous rocks, of swiftly-descending torrent beds and hard pinnacles of rock. One wonders how all these great masses of tumbling rock, washed clear of every fragment of earth, are kept from rushing down at once and filling up the valley. No blade of grass, nor tree, nor any living thing, seems to find a foothold on these sheer and almost perpendicular slopes. Yet, happily, along the river's edge there are vivid green patches of meadowland, and clustering chestnuts and alders, and even here and there an orchard, to relieve with the beauty of its innocent bloom the hard outlines of the hills. The traveller who wishes to know what an Andorran valley looks like need go no farther.

High up on both of the mountain slopes there are canals, carried with superb audacity across their precipitous flanks, a thousand feet above the river. When one is rapidly

descending the valley in a carriage, these actually look as if they bore the water *up* the mountain in defiance of Nature's laws. But to anyone who ascends the valley their mystery is gradually revealed. One gets nearer and nearer to them, until at last, down there below one, amidst the chaos of rocks and rushing waters, lies the quiet canal-head, with its lucent current moving along its ordered course. This is the most wonderful sight in the whole of this troubled valley. It speaks so eloquently of man's will in his undying conflict with Nature; it reveals the secret of those prosperous plains where grow the vine and the olive and the peach; and it tells of forgotten men, who brought with them from the East into Spain and into Europe, even to this remote valley, the science of irrigation. Many a Mussulman captive has wrought his life out in toil in these mountain fastnesses, showing his masters how to water their fields.

Between Sahorre and Py the gorge is very sheer and narrow, and cold and dark of a winter afternoon; but near Py the valley widens, the peaks rise up to less tremendous heights, and the whole verdant space between, and up along the eastern slopes, is bathed in sunlight. Extraordinarily fine contrasts of light and dark shadow await one here in travelling along this mountain road. Py itself stands full in the eye of the sun, and though a rude hamlet, it has a church nine centuries old, with a double belfry carrying a pair of ancient bells, and an inn where, with a little notice, one may count on a good meal. Here one might enjoy a dinner before the big open fire, in the company of the old *Curé*, who keeps bees for a living, and sends his honey all over the world; and learn, from the fine old woman who keeps the inn, some of the fading lore of these hills—of sorceresses and what not. But one would need to furbish up one's Catalan, for she talks in no other language, though her son is a clerk in the Director's office at Vernet, and is now adding English to his other accomplishments.

Beyond Py, remote and old-world as it seems, there is a village still more primitive—the hamlet of Mantet. The path which leads to it cleaves in places the white marble which is abundant here, climbing on to a height of 5,000 feet.

Mantet, with its rude inn and its few inhabitants, its mists

and mountains, is likened, by those who know it well, to the end of the world, and one comes away from it with the feeling of having been carried bodily up from the shining plain into a lofty and remote eyrie in the mountains, in which a man might pass his days forgetful and forgotten of the world.

CHAPTER V

A DAY IN VILLEFRANCHE

January.

OLD VERNET

At nine o'clock the sun, with his customary punctuality, came shining in a crinkled irregular line of gold over the fluted peaks of the Canigou, and at ten I walked down the village street to book a seat in the diligence that goes to Prades.

It was a morning of marvellous beauty. Some faint grey clouds which had come momentarily out of the northern void, were lifting over the south, revealing a turquoise lining of sky, and the light pouring from under them transfigured the whole Valley of Casteil. It looked like a Valley of Dreams beyond the dark shadowy crags which the sunlight had not yet reached. The Canigou was even lovelier still. Its snowy front lay in cold blue shadow, which was yet luminous from the radiation of light; across it lay a shining band of cloud, and above it there was a rim of intensely blue sky. The great mountain seemed raised by these accessories to a climax of beauty. One could no longer measure its height. It seemed the most wonderful and majestic mountain in the world, and a dozen times I stopped to look at it. And then the whole legion of grey clouds rolled away, and it shone once more

white and simple and exquisite in the azure sky, the familiar peak of every day.

I walked on, enjoying the warm bright sunlight, till the "dilly" presently came rumbling by, its bells ringing from the collars of its aged horses. I sat on the box-seat by the driver, a hard-faced Catalan, and the world seemed born again. For there was the dust on the milk-white road and on the wayside hedges, just as though it were midsummer, and I sat warm and contented above it, without a twinge of cold. How many years since I had sat on the box-seat of a stage-coach! The horses were old and bony, and none too sound of wind and limb, but they were well used to the road and its daily task. The driver told me that he went this way from Vernet to Prades every day of his life, wet or fine, on the bitter cold mornings as on these sunlit ones, passenger or no passenger. "But the village folk," he said, "know that I will come, and the hour of my coming."

At the wayside inn at Corneilla, the innkeeper's wife ran out with some money in her palm and a written commission; a little farther on a man ran along by the fore-wheel and gave a message as he ran. At the bridge of Corneilla, where the belfry-tower of its ancient church rises darkly against the shining snows, a heaving damsel, with a fresh face and youth's customary beauty, called after us, running up with a letter for a friend near Prades. The driver descended, and it seemed that he was over-long, and his arm a trifle too protecting as a wayside cart in passing left small standing room between the wheels. He carried her off on this pretext behind the diligence, and so deprived me of further sight of her fresh face. Meadows and orchards and the murmuring Cadi brought us along to Villefranche, and the driver, his hard face unmoved, pointed with his whip-lash to the rails, and said: "In another year the trains will run right through to Vernet, and this diligence will be no more. Good for Vernet," he added—"but for me, the end."

At Villefranche a lame beggar stood under the arch, but he seemed so beaten that he forbore even to ask an alms. Under the arches by the second gate I found an old peasant from the Cerdagne, in a Spanish beaver hat, mending an old pair of trousers. A wayfarer he looked, with his seamed

MARBLE PORCH AT VILLEFRANCHE (*page* 100)

APSE OF THE OLD CHURCH AT CORNEILLA (*page* 98)

brown face and patient air. Poor he was, unquestionably, but rich in his enjoyment of the morning sunlight. Thus does Heaven make all men equal.

Presently I entered the old fortress by the Porte de France. Here the Cadi, guarded by outflanking towers and bastions, flows under the loopholed walls to its junction with the Tet. The heavy iron-studded doors are covered with dust, and are no longer barred. The massive pulleys and chains behind lie idle. Straight before one runs the High Street of Villefranche, narrow and flanked with tall houses, and abandoned, at this season, to cold shadow by the winter sun. It runs past the local inn, which in bygone days, when troops were quartered here and Villefranche was the seat of the prefecture, must have known prosperity. Even now, like a good and self-respecting French inn, it has a local reputation, which it endeavours to maintain.

"Can one lunch in Villefranche?" I asked the fair daughter of the rude old janitor, as she talked to me in the kitchen parlour over the main gate, while her father lumbered off to get his massive keys.

"Oh yes," she replied, "one feeds well at L'Hoste's"; and she spoke with a bright and firm conviction.

As to the inn I speak but from hearsay, for I had no more than a cup of coffee there, which was good, and a liqueur from Monseigneur's Abbey of the Canigou. But I heard a proper clatter of crockery from the *salle-à-manger*, and the air of the café was scented with the aroma of omelettes and other good things, which tempted me to stay and partake thereof. But this was not to be.

"Well, mademoiselle," I said, with a sigh, to the waitress, "we must let the déjeuner wait over to another day; but, just for example, what could I have had to-day?"

Mademoiselle looked diplomatic.

"Viande?" I prompted—"a good chicken, perhaps?"

"Oh yes," she said, "viande for sure—and, with due notice, a poulet."

"And an omelette?"

She brightened up at this, feeling clearly on firmer ground.

"Oh! but certainly, monsieur. Il y a toujours des omelettes." No mistake about that. "Légumes also, and fruit and cheese."

One might do worse then, perhaps, than lunch some day, with an appetite sharpened by travel, at L'Hoste's at Villefranche.

The church, a massive building of dark hewn stone, stands off the *place*, its main feature outside being its two portals of carved marble, with fluted and twisted columns, so dark and sombre that they might be wrought of iron. Within, the church is massive and rude, with great springing arches and monolithic fonts of local marble, some old tombstones, and a carved memorial displaying the arms of a noble family, and the early genius of the sculptor Boher, who was born at Villefranche in the year 1771, to rise elsewhere to a passing fame. A little tablet put up by his widow records all this; and she left a little money, also, for Masses for his soul. But does anyone say them now?

One can see that a clean hand wrought even this small piece. Boher died in 1825, a somewhat exclusive and retiring spirit, but the friend of Canova and David. Some others of his works may still be seen in these parts: his statues of the Virgin, and of St. Matthew at Perpignan, in the church of that name; and a painting of the martyrdom of the saints Abdon and Sennen at Arles, in the Valley of the Tech.

Opposite the church is the old mansion of the Consuls of Villefranche, with a big clock above it, and a stone pool in its basement where the laundresses toil when they do not elect, as in these winter days, to warm themselves in the sun, under the big bridge and the bastions overlooking the Cadi.

One can make a tour of the ramparts, and I did so, in the rough company of the gatekeeper; but it is a stony and interminable affair, and one soon sees enough. His daughter's society would have been far pleasanter. It was ingenious, no doubt, of Monsieur Vauban to plan loopholes for guns, so as to command the pleasant apple-bordered highway to Vernet, and all the other customary means of defence known to warfare in the days of Louis Quatorze; but one gets a little tired now of all this old ferocity, as our grandchildren will, no doubt, of the Dreadnoughts and Thunderers of our own times. For the days of such warfare are over and past. No Spaniards now wish to come over the mountain-passes and get fired at, as they ride, from

VERNET-LES-BAINS

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Monsieur Vauban's guns. "The Spaniard," as the gate-keeper tersely observes, "is finished. We in France think now only of the Prussian; but he is far from here. For the rest, the officers have no taste for barrack life in Villefranche, so dull, so sombre, in winter. We have no theatres, no amusements here for them. The last detachment has been moved to Perpignan, and Villefranche—enfin c'est déclassée."

Le Roi Soleil has been dead these 200 years, and the genius of M. de Vauban has had its hour.

Villefranche was founded in the year of our Lord 1092 by Count William Raymond of the Cerdagne, grandson of him who founded St. Martin's Abbey. It had a predecessor in a hamlet of bad repute named Campilias, whose people were not averse to waylaying the traveller along the great highway which from time immemorial has passed up the valley of the Tet. Its strategical position, here, at the junction of two valleys, has always given it a certain importance, whether, as in Vauban's day, in warfare between France and Spain, or in those earlier times of the Count William Raymond, when the Counts of the Conflent and the Cerdagne were anxious about their upland territories, as open to attack from the sea-fronting plains of the Roussillon.

Accordingly, the Count, in establishing this new outpost hard by his ancestral château at Corneilla in the Cadi Valley, resolved to make it as populous as possible by granting it exceptional privileges. It was to be a free town, with exemption from all the feudal impositions of the period, and a market-place, with only one other at Hix to compete with it throughout the Cerdagne. Shut up within its fortified walls, with no lands of its own, but with a great highway passing through it, Villefranche set its mind to manufactures and trade. Workers in cloth and leather came to settle here, and the Jews, those great traders of the Middle Ages, settled here in considerable numbers. The place was apt to their peculiar idiosyncrasy. In the year 1270, James I., King of Aragon, conferred upon the townsmen of Villefranche the right of being tried in their own town alone. The government was vested in three Consuls, who were elected each year on the eve of All Saints, and a deputy represented it as a royal borough in the Spanish Cortes.

So well did it conserve its privileges that as late as April 7, 1756, there is a record of a bourgeois of Prades who asked to be admitted as a citizen, a King's man, of the royal borough (*homme real de Villafranca-de-Conflent*), and to be allowed to enjoy all the privileges, honours, and prerogatives, of other freemen of the borough. There is no doubt that throughout the intervening years the importance of Villefranche as a place of arms and commerce was well understood, and there is ample record of the benevolence of Kings, whether of Aragon or Majorca or France, towards this curious old town half hidden away here under the frowning outworks of the Pyrenees.

But Villefranche had also its periods of vicissitude, and strange and even tragic events have transpired within its walls. In 1344, holding loyally by the exiled House of Majorca, it refused admission to the Counts Gillabert de Centella and Berenger de Vilarasa who were sent by King Peter IV. of Aragon to receive the submission of the Conflent, and slew the Syndic of Puigcerda who was on his way down the valley to swear allegiance to the King. The latter thereupon advanced from Thuir and laid siege to Villefranche, which King James of Majorca made a gallant attempt to relieve at the head of his small force from Puigcerda. He furiously attacked the main gate, while a number of his men tried to cut open a way with their axes, but the Aragonese rapidly assembled on the ramparts; while the townsmen, upon whose support the Majorcans had relied, were unable to stir, being held back by a force of cavaliers under Adhemar de Mosset and the Viguier of the Conflent. King James thereupon retired up the valley to the Cerdagne.

Three years later, in 1347, he again came down and took Villefranche, which suffered heavily during these phases of what was practically a civil war. Its fortifications were strengthened from time to time, and under Alphonso V. of Aragon, the Tour de Diable was added, with the inscription, "Commensada fo l'any MCCCXXXI, he fini da l'any MCCCLIV," which still survives.

Taken by assault during the invasion of Louis XI. in 1462-1493, Villefranche finally passed into the hands of France in the seventeenth century. The armies of Mazarin descended upon the Roussillon, and on July 5, 1654, the Count de Bussy Rabutin, after a siege of six days, forced an

entrance into this frontier town. Once more its importance as a strategical position was recognized, and its fortifications were remodelled and greatly extended, under the orders of Louis XIV., by Vauban, who built the Bastions, de la Reine, du Roi, and du Dauphin, and effectually dominated the whole valley of the Upper Conflent with his new castle on the cliffs, which is connected with the town by subterranean galleries and batteries of formidable extent. It still rises there intact, looking defiantly towards Spain, aglow in the flooding sunlight, like a thing alive. But its days are accomplished, and it waits here now, void and untenanted, for its *coup de grace*.

The Revolution brought turmoil into Villefranche, as it did into the rest of Europe, and it is curious to see how the leaven worked within this little town so far off from the centre of the storm.

In 1790 a patriotic club was formed by the more ardent spirits, who treated the Mayor and Council with contumely, and went about branding them as "an illiterate and unenlightened crew." A year later the municipality, seized with a constitutional and patriotic fervour, decreed that all the citizens should meet in the town-hall and swear to die rather than commit any unconstitutional act, to sustain the burdens of the nation by paying their taxes, and never to permit any foreign invasion of French soil nor to forego their title to be known as Frenchmen. These admirable sentiments were reinforced by a solemn vow before the shrine of Our Lady of Good Success in the old church of Villefranche.

In 1792 feelings ran high owing to the action of a Captain of the volunteers of the Pyrénées-Orientales, to whom the defence of the town was entrusted, who was seen training a gun from the Porte de France on the inhabitants, saying that it was to kill the aristocrats, and that if he had his way the town would soon be destroyed. The following day these tempestuous volunteers made a riot in the *place*, with the object of preventing a non-juring priest from celebrating Mass. The name of the town was incontinently changed to "Commune Franche," to embody its republican sentiments; and early in 1794 the bells of the old clock-tower were taken down, the church plate was presented to the Republic, and the old church of St. James, which for 700 years had fulfilled

its Christian purpose, was converted into a temple of the Goddess of Reason and a meeting-place for the new republican society. A notice of one of these meetings survives:

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

It is hereby made known that to-morrow, the 10*th current, at four o'clock in the afternoon, a meeting will take place in the Temple of Reason. All true sans-culottes are invited to attend.*

Given at Villefranche the 10*th Thermidor of the year II. of the French Republic, one and indivisible.*

A little later, having celebrated "The Fête of the Supreme Being" and of "The Immortality of the Soul" and "The Anniversary of the Death of the Last Capet," these fantastic gentlemen fell out amongst themselves. Four companies of the 5th Battalion of the Ariège and one company of Canonniers of the Aude attacked each other, swords were drawn, blood flowed, and many were badly wounded. Villefranche was greatly alarmed, the tocsin was sounded, the National Guard beat to arms, and the combatants were with difficulty separated. For the next ten months the town was considered to be in a state of siege (December, 1795).

War had in the meanwhile been declared by Spain, and on the 30th July, 1793, a Spanish force of over 3,000 men, of whom 1,200 were cavalry, appeared before Villefranche, occupying the heights above the Vernet road. Twelve hours' cannonading at close quarters brought the town with its garrison of new levies to its knees, and the Spanish army entered in. Some six weeks later a small French force of 450 men recovered the fortress by a stratagem so artless as to suggest that the Spaniards were in a hurry to be gone. Displaying his small force to the best advantage on the hillsides, the French Commandant advanced with sixty men and called upon the Spaniards to surrender. Supposing that they were menaced by a formidable army, these brave fellows capitulated, and, in the words of a caustic notary of Prades, who has chronicled the event, "*une heure après, la garnison de Villefranche defilait entre deux haies de trente soldats de la République*," and hurried off to join the main Spanish army in the Valley of the Tech, leaving vast quantities of provisions behind them.

One wonders to what purpose all Monsieur Vauban's great forts and walls and batteries were constructed, if Villefranche could do no better than this. It is said that he preferred Villefranche even to Mont Louis, calling it " the key of France." But neither its military record nor its position to the eyes of even a lay observer would appear to justify this estimate.

Perhaps the most poignant of all the events that have transpired within the grey walls of Villefranche since it was founded 800 years ago is that known as the Conspiracy of de Llar. It relates to the year 1674, when Spanish sentiment was still averse to the dominion of France, and the proud old families, with the loyalty of cavaliers, brooded over the humiliation of their King across the Pyrenees. At Villefranche they were resolved to make one great effort to return to their natural allegiance.

A Spanish force of 3,000 men was to come secretly over the mountains, while those who were within arranged to open the gates of the city. Holy Thursday was the day fixed for this momentous event, and the conspirators asked leave of Perlan de Seignes, Lieutenant-Governor of Villefranche for Louis Quatorze, to go in procession to the Convent of the Cordeliers outside the walls. They invited him to join them at a splendid lunch that was to follow the ceremony, to which the other officers of the garrison were also asked. It seemed a promising enough arrangement, but the conspirators reckoned without a traitor in their own midst. This was Inez de Llar, the young daughter of Don Carlos de Llar, and a member of one of the most noble and illustrious families in the country. It is the old story of the havoc wrought by a woman's heart and a divided allegiance. For Inez de Llar was in love with an officer of the garrison named Courtré, and hearing his name mentioned, she had listened behind the door of her father's room to the talk of the conspirators, and had learnt their decision to kill her lover if he stood in their way. She made haste to inform Courtré, who carried the tale to his superior officer. The conspirators were arrested, and Don Emmanuel Des Catllar, a member of one of the great houses of Catalonia, gave up the whole story on being subjected to torture. Don Francisco de Llar, the brother of Inez, made a timely escape over the border ; but her father was taken, with all the other members

of her family. Don Carlos de Llar and many of his kinsmen were executed, and their heads exposed in iron cages to the gaze of a disaffected people at the gates of Villefranche, of Perpignan, and of the fort at Amelie-les-Bains. Her mother and others of her blood who escaped death were exiled for ever from their native land. The unhappy Inez, overcome by shame and grief, and the object of execration and contempt amongst all who knew her, took refuge in a convent, in which she passed the remaining years of her tragic life.

You will hear this tale at Villefranche in connection with the Cova Bastera, one of those dark limestone caverns peculiar to this country which burrows into the mountain-side by the walls of Villefranche; for it is here they say the conspiracy was hatched.

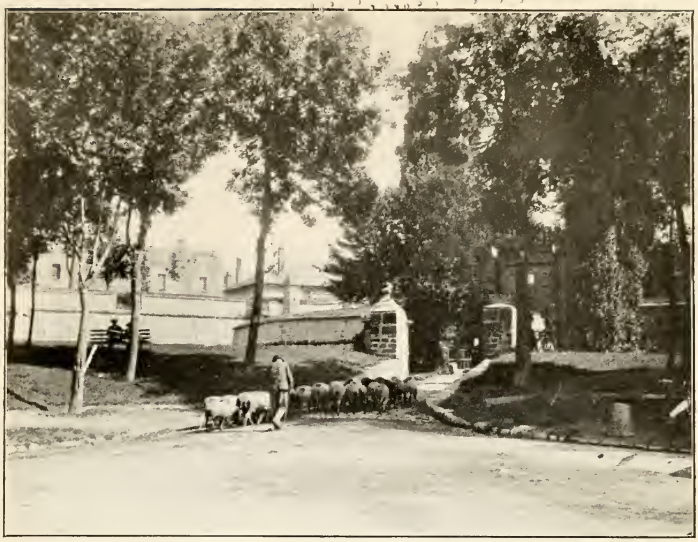
CHAPTER VI

ST. MICHEL DE CUXA

December.

MONT LOUIS

The old uncertain clock at the Hôtel des Commandants was striking ten as we drove off on a visit, down the valley, to Ria and St. Michel de Cuxa. It was a superb and perfect morning, and it remained to the end a superb and perfect day. A white frost lay on all the secluded places on the grass; overhead the sky was as blue as the sea, without a cloud for one instant to mar its unity of colour. There was no faintest whisper of any breeze, and yet the air was cold and invigorating, making one's blood course with an ardent vitality, and the horses prick forward with unwonted vigour. From the clear-cut summit of the Canigou the white incense of the



AT THE GATE OF MONT LOUIS (*page* 116)

A FRENCH HIGHWAY (*page* 116)

snow rose up to heaven in luminous spirals and fleeting pillars of loveliness, like an offering to the immortal gods.

All the way to Villefranche the sun shone upon us and the upper fortress glowed in the splendid light; but at the turn into the Valley of the Tet we ran into the heavy blue shadows of the great cliffs which shut it in. Near Ria we were once more in the sunlight, the quick canal with its burden of living water racing past us on our right. Here is one of the most charming of all the landscapes in the Valley of the Tet. Looking up the valley, one sees at one glance the Tet coming down straight as an arrow from its bow; the white highway with its line of plane-trees; the small village of Ria clustering about a conical hill, at its base the parish church with its yellow tower and bells; the village cemetery with its shining white gravestones and dark cypresses; the wide meadows and bare orchards and fields that in their season wave with ripening corn. Far beyond, towering up on all sides, rise the grey and purple mountains covered with snow. The village itself, with its red and brown houses clustering up the hill, is charmingly picturesque, a bit from Italy or Spain, or perhaps the Moorish East, but not French at all. Facing it on the south, across the valley, is the old fortified church of Sirach and a glorious expanse of sunlit mountain-side up to the glittering summit of the Canigou.

Here is the cradle of a race famous in the history of the world, for the Counts of Ria, whose château once dominated the village and looked hence upon the beauty of the world, were the ancestors of the Bourbons of Europe. The blood of Count Wilfred of Ria has flowed in the veins of the Kings of France, of Aragon and Castile, of Navarre, Sicily, Naples, Majorca, and Portugal; and here, almost within sight of the ancestral home, died in 1285 Philip le Hardi, a descendant through his mother of Wilfred of Ria. It is difficult to believe all this as one climbs up the rugged streets, past the rude stone houses where the old women sit basking with their cats in the sun. For all the glory of Ria is departed, and little remains to it now, save peace and warmth and sunlight, perhaps the most priceless of its boons.

We drove on to Codalet, a small village crowning the

entrance to the valley, whose old towers and ruined walls, constructed by the Abbots of Cuxa as an outer defence for their abbey, still linger amidst the yellow houses. One of these in the main street has a loopholed turret which commands the whole length of the street. Some little way off amidst the fields and orchards is the parish cemetery with its short avenue of cypresses, in the centre of which is the stricken figure of the Christ; the purple snow-covered mountains rising grandly beyond. Like many another burying-place in these valleys, it is beautifully placed.

The road to St. Michel is broad and smooth, and very beautiful when the apple-bloom is on the boughs in spring, and the young corn-shoots are green about it. But in December its charm lies in the bare tracery of the orchards, the clear winter sunlight, and in the view it yields of the old abbey buildings, dominated afar off by the snowy mass and white blade-edge of the Canigou. We lunched at one end of a long wide terrace that must have been made by the monks —a line of apple-trees on one flank, and wide and spacious fields and meadows, with cattle moving slowly amidst them, on the other. Lunch was a quiet and delightful festival, and the sun almost too fierce to sit in, though the air was fresh and cold. After lunch we climbed up a ladder that lay against the south wall of the magnificent tower of the abbey. High above us rose the great foursquare keep, and straight before us ran the milk-white road, lined with orchards and fields, to the next village of Clara. A memorable outlook!

The abbey itself is in a lamentable state of dissolution. The tower, supported by vast buttresses, leans a little away from the perpendicular, as it has from the beginning. The architect, it is said, was so mortified at his apparent failure that he left the country in despair; but years have shown that he worried himself, as most of us do, to no purpose. Its fellow tumbled to the ground in 1839. The existing tower is little more at present than a shell, all its interior having fallen away. The rest of the abbey is in a state of almost hopeless ruin. The great refectory is a barn, the courts are heavy with litter and the offal of a farm, the few chambers that survive, with their elegant mouldings, are in the possession of the humblest people. The Chapel of Pietro

Orseolo, once Doge of Venice, who came here from the Queen-city to repent, during long years of mortification, for his sins, is scarcely worth the trouble of entering; it has become so mean and poor, and the marble cloisters, with their carved capitals, have been carried away to ornament a bath at Prades. A little way off from these sad grey buildings is the eighteenth-century mansion of the Abbot, with its ancient doorway of sun-warmed marble and its Lombard tracery, the only beautiful thing that has survived the ruin of the Revolution and the sinfulness of those who, under the cloak of religion, gave way to the temptations of commoner men.

And yet even here the Spring comes with all her wonted beauty, and the lilac blows under the grey walls, and the orchards are a sea of bloom under the azure sky, and the little Riberetta murmurs as it rolls over the yellow pebbles, as it did long before there was any abbey here at all.

CHAPTER VII

A MIRACLE PLAY AT MILLAS

December.

THE COURIER

"*Eulalie fut bonne pucelle; elle avait beau corps, âme plus belle. Les ennemis de Dieu voulurent la vaincre, voulurent lui faire servir le diable. Elle n'écoute pas plus les mauvais conseil lers qu'elle Renie Dieu, qui demeure sus au ciel. Ni pour or, ni pour argent, ni parure, ni menace du Roi, ni prière, ni aucune chose, on ne peut jamais plier la jeune fille qu'elle n'aimât pas le service de Dieu. Et pour cela elle fut présentée à Maximien, qui était en ce jour Roi sur les païens. Il l'exhorte, ce dont ne chant*

à elle, qu'elle fuie le nom chrétien, et que, pour cela elle abandonne sa doctrine. Plutôt elle supporterait les fers que de perdre sa virginité. Pour cela elle mourut a grande honnêteté. Ils la jettèrent dans le feu de façon à ce qu'elle brûle tôt. Elle n'avait aucune coulpe; aussi ne brûlat-elle pas. A cela le Roi païen ne voulut se fier, et ordonna de lui ôter la tête avec l'épée. La demoiselle n'y contredit; elle veut laisser le siècle si Christ l'ordonne. En figure de colombe elle vola au ciel. Prions tous qu'elle daigne pour nous intercéder que Christ ait merci de nous après la mort, et nous laisse venir à lui par sa clémence."

These words enshrine in the oldest existing specimen in verse of the Langue d'Oil of the tenth century, of which this is a translation, the tragic story of the virgin martyr St. Eularia, who was born at Merida in Spain 290 years after Christ, and was burnt at Elne thirteen years later. Her ashes lie in the great cathedral of Barcelona, erected in her honour, and her memory is still green amongst the hamlets and cities of Catalonia. The story of her martyrdom has been retold through the intervening centuries upon unnumbered occasions; pictures have been painted depicting its moving details; churches and cathedrals have been dedicated in her honour, and vast audiences have been moved by the dramatic telling of her fate. There exists in old Catalan verse of the fifteenth century an old mystery play which has never long been out of use, and still retains unchanged the very atmosphere and feeling of mediæval society. It was to see a revival of this tragedy after the lapse of fifty years, in the little town of Millas, that we motored out this day.

It was a perfect Sunday, the air as soft and balmy as in spring. As we raced along the white highway, leaving Ria and Prades behind us, the Canigou grew in splendour, a mass of sapphire ; and snow-white luminous clouds lay behind it, and the sunlight shone through these and upon the superb and dazzling summit, in a manner that transfigured it beyond words. It looked a supernatural being ; and at the least it was of an incomparable beauty, rising here nine thousand feet above the wintry plain. We passed the village of Eus, which clusters up from the winding ribbon of the Tet like a flock of white egrets in the sunlight, and

THE CRATER OF THE CANIGOU (*page* 122)

PINE AND RHODODENDRON ON THE CANIGOU (*page* 122)

culminates in a fortified church that speaks of war. It is a perfect specimen of the Catalan village, and its history bears out its character of a proud and unyielding settlement of men.

Running through Vinça and Ille, and passing whole families of dark and wild-looking gipsies by the wayside, we drew up at one o'clock in the small *place*, outside the grey loopholed church of Millas. A fair was in progress, and under the red awnings of the booths all sorts of tinkers' ware and household utensils were exposed for sale. Under the church wall there was spread out a quantity of brown and yellow earthenware, and an old swineherd from the hills was tending a litter of young pigs that were routing about in the sand, and were evidently for sale. Here under the church porch, in the *place* of Millas, was displayed of old the Trajœdia de Santa Eularia, which we had come to see; and looking about us, where, in spite of modernity, old battlemented arches and grey stone walls still lingered, we could well picture the mediæval scene. Here the populace thronged on those bygone Sundays, entering with the fervour of faith and a real emotion into the sorrows of the martyred saint.

We crossed the threshold of the church, and passed, as it were, at once into those departed years. Moving through its sombre aisle, we approached its vast gilded Spanish altar, where a priest in a stall was reading his breviary by the light of a single taper. On either hand, on the grey walls above him, were frescoes of the martyrdom of St. Eularia, the one showing her bound before her judges, the other with the flames raging about her at the stake. We climbed up a flight of ancient stairs to the organ loft, where upon a lectern there lay open a vast Book of Goigs, written in a fair laborious hand. The *Curé* came hurrying up, suspicious of our motives, but full of a certain Spanish courtesy. The Goig, or canticle of joy in honour of the saint, would, he said, be sung here after the play was over. There were others in the book before us, in old Catalan verse: the *Goigs dels Ous en l'honor de la verge Maria del Mon*, and the chant of *Nostra Senyora del Roser*, and many another. The choir loft itself was sustained on ancient beams of the early seventeenth century, all elaborately carved, and now black with time. The *Curé* offered the following explanation of

the gloom of these old Spanish churches. They were built, he said, for the most part before the invention of printing, when those who came here to worship had no books and few could read. Of what use was light to them? They came for prayer and meditation, and the gloom and the silence were welcome.

Waiting for the play to begin, we passed on, under an old fortified archway that fronts the *place*, into the oldest part of Millas. Here were narrow and tortuous lanes, barred by gates and archways and shut in between high walls, with only here and there a small window clamped with heavy and rusty iron, that must from its roughness and design have been fashioned far back in the Middle Ages. We might have been afoot in a purely Eastern town, in some hidden thoroughfare of Cairo or Benares. The old fortified walls could still be traced, amidst the lines of houses that have been built against them, while in places they ran straight and untrammelled as of old.

At the stroke of two from the great bell of the church, we entered the Café Acézat, where the play was to be performed. The large hall was full of the people of Millas; some of them, the old women especially, as antique and grave and sombre as the oldest parts of the town itself. The play opened with a prologue delivered by the father of St. Eularia, an old gentleman in a purple gown (in real life a master-mason), who was found kneeling upon a rush chair. Elastic-side boots and a robe of the period Henri II. detracted somewhat from his otherwise excellent appearance. His servant broke in upon his meditations to tell him of certain forebodings he had about his daughter Eularia. The beautiful Eularia came in sadly to confirm these. The Emperor Calfurnia, it seemed, was an aspirant for her hand, but Eularia scorned the advances of a pagan. To save her from the dangers which threatened her, Liberio thereupon sent her away secretly to a remote estate in the country, with her cousin Julie, under the care of the tutor Donat.

Eularia, a handsome Catalan girl with dark hair falling about her shoulders, carried herself throughout the play with a statuesque composure, delivering her long alexandrines with a dignity of voice and gesture that can only have come out of the East.

In Act II. Calfurnia assembled his Council, and promulgated laws against his Christian subjects. This scene was purely Catalan. The Councillors, in scarlet robes and flat-topped black birettas, delivered themselves with a republican vigour and independence, the Emperor being a comparatively obscure figure. "C'est vivant, c'est vecu," was the remark of a French critic. It was a meeting of the village council, and all had something to say, after the manner of Catalonia.

Act III. took us to the country retreat at Ponciano, where Mossen Donat, the clerical-looking tutor, was in charge. Opportunity was taken to deliver long monologues on Christian doctrine, which illustrated the original purpose of the play. But Eularia, having learnt of the cruel edicts of the Emperor Calfurnia, escaped by night to the city, there to face the Emperor in person.

In Act IV. she made a dramatic entry into the Council-chamber, and boldly informed the Emperor that he was a worshipper of false gods. She set before him the beauties of the Christian faith. The Captain of the Guard, moved by her youth and innocence, begged the Emperor to allow him to persuade her to take a more reasonable view; but Eularia was immovable, and the angry Emperor thereupon ordered her to the stake.

In Act V. the play reached a passionate and eloquent climax. Bound and crucified, and subjected to every torture, Eularia remained constant in her faith, answering the enraged Emperor in defiant terms. The efforts of her executioners were set at naught by two little white-winged angels with palm branches in their hands and white wreaths round their hair, who blew the flames of the torches away as they approached her body. This miracle of Divine intervention in her favour conquered the hearts of all but the Emperor. The Captain and the guards flung down their lances and renounced their allegiance, as the flames at length gathered about her bier. The snow fell upon this fierce and vivid scene, as though in benediction; and as the soul of St. Eularia escaped to heaven, in the form of a dove, the little white angels sang an anthem in her praise.

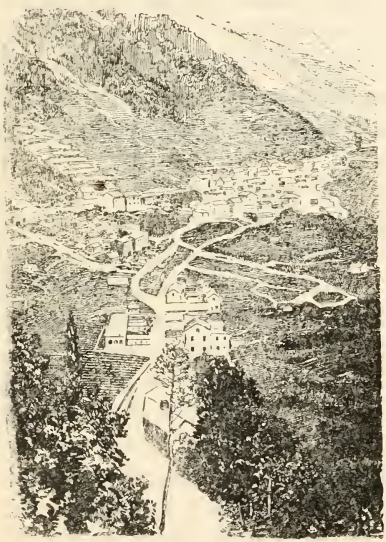
In spite of much that was naïve and provocative of mirth

rather than of solemnity, the play carried us back to those Middle Ages in which it was written and first performed; when life was cheap, and religion a passion; when the infidel still thundered at the gates of Christian Europe, and the memory of past martyrdom was still fresh in the minds of the people. Here, in the old *place* of Millas or under the fortified towers of Elne, where in the carved marble of her cloisters these incidents may still be seen depicted; such a play as this, arranged with all the solemnity of the Church, and played to an audience of simple and earnest people, cannot have failed to make a profound impression. We were glad, therefore, to have seen it even under the less favourable circumstances of modern life.

CHAPTER VIII

VERNET TO MONT LOUIS BY ELECTRIC RAILWAY

September.



THE ROAD TO MONT LOUIS

It was a lovely and perfect morning: the sun shone brightly in a clear blue sky, there was no breath of wind, and yet there was a fine and tonic freshness in the air, as of winter afar off. The vast outlying spurs of the Canigou rose up like mystic battlements in the sun-haze, and an air as of some enchantment lay brooding over their blue masses. Up there all life seemed at a pause, as if some ceremony, of which one had no hint, were in progress in those far and secret haunts. But down in the valley, in the beautiful park, where a stream ran bubbling by, all was life and animation; and under the yellowing chestnut-trees, upon the under-surface of the

leaves, there was a perpetual play of glancing light and shadow. It was the kind of day on which even plain people must rejoice to be alive.

At noon I left for Mont Louis. Villefranche, as we passed it, seemed full to-day of a sort of magnificent pictorial interest. The purple-grey cliffs which shut in the Valley of the Tet here rise bare and forbidding, in an access of almost savage grandeur, sheer up into the narrow sky overhead. Little vegetation finds room, apparently, for growth on these stern and inhospitable bulwarks, although to an eye seeking for minor beauties there soon appears, amidst even their ferocity, many a smiling wild-flower, many a flaming patch of broom, and many a hardy shrub, springing with fearless grace from the least likely soil. Down in the dark bottom of this gorge runs in dark pools and foaming rapids the little mountain Thetis, fringed with soft meadows and sheltered under green overhanging trees. Every river, it would seem, carves its own bed, and one can only infer that this stupendous cleft in the mountains is the work of the little stream which runs so peacefully, and with such edifying humility and grace, at their feet.

Where the Tet receives the inflowing tribute of the Cadi, fresh from the beautiful Vale of Vernet, the new electric railway climbs with some daring and no little grace up its narrowing iron-bound valley to the sunlit and wind-swept uplands of Mont Louis and the Cerdagne. For the most part it follows the left bank of the river—if *bank* indeed be the right appellation for the sheer cliffs which here plunge precipitously to its edge. Opposite lies the old military road, immemorial and of the land, passing through its villages and townlets, a pleasant way for the leisurely traveller. Along this highway the tide of life has rolled for ages. Its hard surface has resounded to the measured march of the Roman legions; it has echoed to the hoof-beats of the Saracen invader; it has carried the armies of France and Spain. In days yet further withdrawn, and almost lost in the mists of time, some rough mountain track, its early predecessor, must have brought the wild hillmen trafficking down to the sea, bartering their iron and their pelts for the bales of the Phœnician trader, and

learning their first lessons in civilization from the cultured Greeks of Pyrene. How many hurried down this way along the edge of the sparkling, foaming Thetis, in that memorable summer of the year 217 B.C., to look upon the portent of Hannibal, marching with his strange elephants and African pomp to the conquest of Rome?

The electric line for the most part takes its own course, independent of all such associations, crossing and recrossing the dark gorge, with a hard unconcern for its ancient right of obstruction. Two great bridges have been flung across it with a skill and daring that do credit to the French engineers. The first of these, the Pont Séjourné, consists of a long viaduct of sixteen arches, 200 metres in length, the middle portion of which, of four gigantic arches, is carried on a single pointed arch, which springs directly above the river. The second, the Pont Gisclard, is an airy fabric, whose flying curves and tracery of wire give little idea of its enormous strength. This bridge crosses the valley at a height of 80 metres. It is the first suspension-bridge of its size and character built in Europe, and it bears the name of the gallant officer of engineers who designed and made it. By a tragic fatality he was killed on the very day the line was thrown open, in the first train that ran across it. But his work endures, and the great bridge lifting its graceful lines against the white background of the Pyrenean snows will speak his name with eloquence for generations to come.

After leaving Villefranche, the first village the traveller comes to is Serdinya, with its brown church tower and old bridge connecting its two portions across the flood. The next is Olette, whose clustering houses and ancient church overhang the river, their straight brown and yellow walls reflected in its pools, like those of some little Italian town. At Evol the shattered towers of an old feudal castle testify to the bygone lordship of the Viscounts of Evol, who were nearly allied to the Dukes of Hijar and other grandees of Spain. There follow in a gorge Exalada, where the long-forgotten Abbey of St. Andrew had its brief and precarious existence till a flood from the Tet swept it to its end; Thués, a bathing establishment under the rough cliffs; and the opening of the dark and

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

DOOR OF ROYAL CHAPEL OF MAJORCA,
PERPIGNAN (*page* 138)

OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF PERPIGNAN (*page* 125)

narrow cleft known as the Gorge of Carença. Next come Font Pedrouse, and the little hamlet of St. Thomas far below, every detail of its life laid bare to the traveller's eye; and high above it the ruins of an old Moorish castle. Looking back from here, with the bridge of Séjourné spanning the gorge, there is the finest of a succession of remarkable views. High up above it there tower pointed and lofty summits, touched even in September with the early snow. In winter the whole world here is robed in white. At Planés there is a small triangular church, which is thought by some to be the resting-place of the unhappy Othman-Abu-Neza-al-Shemi, whose romantic story is well known amidst these hills.

Mont Louis takes one by surprise. The narrow rock-bound valley, up which the train has climbed three thousand feet since it left Villefranche, here suddenly expands into a smooth, well-watered, corn and pasture land, green and gold and smiling, under the spreading sunlight. The landscape is painted in large broad washes of colour, and lies open before one, the grim Pyrenean peaks, nine thousand feet in height, being far withdrawn. Here, in fact, one is at the very top of the watershed, and the pass into Spain known as the Col de la Perche lies open under a majestic sky. Just here it was that Vauban, with his fine unerring eye, chose to place his fortress of Mont Louis, to guard what the skill of Mazarin had won for France.

CHAPTER IX

A TOWN OF LOUIS QUATORZE

"Roulez tambours! pour couvrir la frontière;
Roulez tambours! roulez tambours!"

MONT LOUIS

THERE was no Mont Louis before the year 1681, when Colonel François de Fortia Durban came here to lay its foundations; but it had a predecessor, notwithstanding, for the world did not begin with Louis Quatorze. For unnumbered centuries this place of the dividing waters was of import to the rulers of men, and its true significance can never have been entirely hidden from their eyes. Here of old rose the towers of Ovansa, once owned by the Oms and the Llupias and other great families of the land, and still known in their ruin as the Castellasse. At their foot clustered the hamlet of Vilar d'Ovansa, whose existence has been completely merged in the more modern town.

When Colonel de Fortia Durban set about the task that was to keep him employed during the remaining nineteen years of his life, he found himself an intruder in the midst of a sullen and hostile people. The Catalans of the Cerdagne, a loyal and obstinate race, were of no mind to accept the government of France. Nature herself, they said, had given them to Spain, and their hearts were tied to their old Kings over the border. The rising walls and bastions of Mont Louis were a cause to them of bitterness, and the symbol of their captivity. They would lend no hand, therefore, to the construction of the new fortress, nor, when it was built, would they come to live there or provision it from their fields. So the droning town-criers went about the cities of Languedoc offering to all who would come to the new town, which was to bear

the King's name and look towards the marches of Spain, good living, ample wages, and special privileges and favours. The Languedocians came; and though they have long since been merged amongst their Catalan neighbours, who are now as determined Frenchmen as they were once Spaniards, traces of the old tongue of *oc* still survive in the patois of Mont Louis.

The fortress, with all its provision for such an emergency, has never been called upon to sustain a siege, but it has fulfilled its purpose as a strong place of arms on the Spanish border. The Maréchal de Noailles used it in 1691 as a base for his advance down the Valley of the Segre, and a hundred years later the fiery Dagobert, fought under its walls his famous Battle of La Perche. It was at this period, while the French troops were adding to their traditional glory, that the politicians within the fortress were making themselves ridiculous after their custom by changing the name of their town to that of the Mount (they might as well have said the Fount) of Liberty. This passion for a symbolical nomenclature lasted from the year II. to the year X., when Mont Louis quietly resumed its old name, which it is said to have in common with only one other in France.

Another distinguishing fact about Mont Louis is that it is without exception the highest and the coldest garrison town in France. The town limits do not extend beyond its walls, and the favoured citizen finds himself in a different commune the moment he crosses the threshold of its gates. Having thus no other suburban allotments, its thrifty inhabitants, including the soldiers of its garrison, resort to the moat, in which, with a Vesuvian philosophy, and heedless of war's alarms, they snatch from year to year a crop of dainty vegetables. One exception only there is to the self-contained life of this seventeenth-century town, and that concerns its dead, who lie buried in exile at Cabanasse, beyond its walls.

The foundations of the town are laid in the solid rock, a circumstance which has to a great extent dictated its irregular shape; and within its shelter there is room for a *corps d'armée* of 4,000 men. It is surrounded at a distance by great peaks which rise to a height of over 8,000 feet, and are in some cases crowned by fortified bulwarks which com-

plete its military character. During the bitter winter weather, when the landscape about it is white with snow, and the lofty Pyrenean summits stand grey and menacing, and the Col de la Perche is driven by all the winds of heaven, Mont Louis is forlorn indeed—a place of exile to the soldiers of the Midi cooped up within its walls.

But a change is coming even here. The new passion for winter sports, for *la vie en plein air*, has attracted the attention of the Touring Club of France to this upland country, where the snow lies thick, where the sky when it is not clouded is of a Mediterranean blue, where the sun when it shines has much of the glory of the South; and it is hoped even at this season, hitherto considered the most terrible of the year, to attract a great number of visitors, including the English, who, as is well known, will go anywhere. Thus it was that last winter in January a caravan of Parisians and other adventurous people, to the number of several hundred, came, under the admirable organization of the Touring Club, to luge and to ski and to drive their sleighs before the eyes of the astonished inhabitants. In the summer it is, and has long been, frequented as a health-resort. People come up here to inhale its superb mountain air, to escape the hot weather of the plains, and to visit the great pilgrim shrine of Font Romeu. At such times every room in Mont Louis, they say, is let, and the hard old garrison town, which has changed so little since Le Roi Soleil was King, is bright with the presence of numbers of women and children.

Perhaps its most perfect season is in early summer, before this influx of visitors from the plains has begun. Then it is that the old eighteenth century holds sway, and for an idler there is perfection in the still, warm air, and in the soft influences with which time has chastened the military fierceness of Mont Louis. For it is a wonderfully quiet and peaceable place, this old fortress of Vauban's; and out of season one is left entirely alone upon the vast, sloping, grass-covered ramparts. There, with no envious hint of war or turmoil, one sees the swallows circling overhead, the great mountains sharp and clear-cut against the blue sky, the golden-brown lichen on the old grey roofs which have

sagged and become concave under the burden of the years, the fruit-trees spread against the sunlit walls, lilacs everywhere in bloom in June, the grassy spaces covered with buttercups and daisies, the old-world clock-tower over the main gate of the inner fortress, its minute-hand creeping on from hour to hour, from century to century, while people about it live and die, and what was once brave and splendid and triumphant becomes old and shabby and domestic. One hears the birds singing, the rumble of a distant cart over the stony street, the slow and sleepy murmur of bees in the ivy against the walls. The air is of a marvellous stillness, the long sunlight falls upon the grass, and deep shadows brood under the silent bastions. Walking along the ramparts, one comes upon the old barracks with embrasures seven feet thick, now turned into a summer hotel, and upon such a day as this tranquillity itself. There is a long shady avenue behind, set with chairs and tables, overlooking a great bastion turned rabbit-warren, where the soft wild creatures feed and burrow, nibbling the green pine-boughs which give an aroma to their flesh. They are owned by the proprietor of the hotel, who shoots them *à la Tartarin* from his terrace with a gun, unmoved by their large eyes and white-cotton tails and innocent airs of enjoyment.

There is more of life and movement before the Hôtel de France, facing the monument to General Dagobert, who led his men out from Mont Louis and beat the Spaniards in the open on the Col de la Perche; and in the vast barrack-yard about which the inner fortress is built there is always such animation as belongs to men who are under arms and brisk about their business.

But, withal, Mont Louis is one of those places in the world whose course is run. Built as a great fortress to hold 4,000 men, it has come down to the care of a simple company, left here one suspects, more from regard for the feelings of its loyal citizens than from respect for its military character. It stands for a day that has gone, for Kings long since discredited, for old rivalries that have lost their sting, for forgotten men and forgotten things. Even the railway which might have brought it life, has passed by it in its decline. For it runs its iron course lower down by the new

village of Cabanasse, heedless of old-world claims ; and Mont Louis, to which all travellers were once bound to resort, is now but a backwater. And yet once it was an ark of refuge to those who came buffeted and beaten by the snow over the Col de la Perche; and upon many a wintry night the traveller, weary from the long wayfaring up the Valley of the Tet, found warmth and good cheer in the shelter of its hospitable inns. But all these things are of the past. Electric trains make little of journeys of 50 kilometres, and a magnificent hotel with 400 rooms now caters at Font Romeu for all but the quietest people.

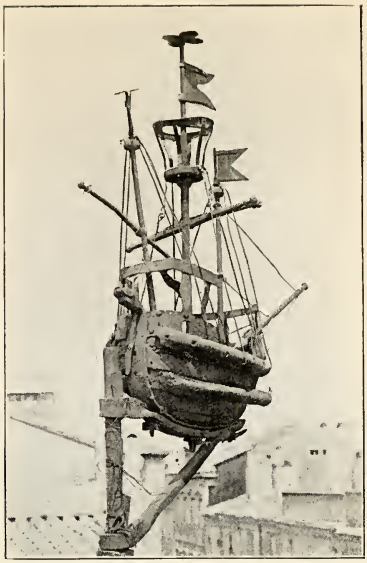
CHAPTER X

THE CANIGOU

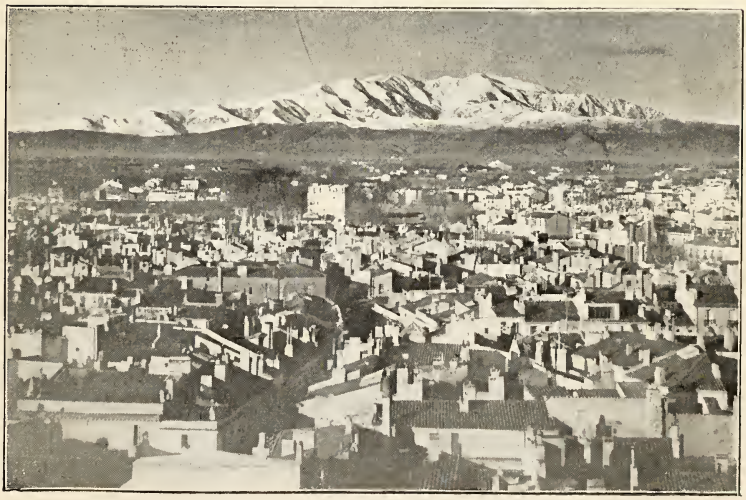
The Canigou is a realm in itself, and it would take a Hokusai to depict the various aspects of its beauty. It is one of those wonderful things which, though it for ever impresses the mind of one who has seen it, has yet, so far as the general world is concerned, by some miracle kept itself aloof and almost unknown. In this respect it is like the Shway Dagôn, which Lord Dalhousie declared to be the one thing most worth seeing in India, the Taj alone excepted. And yet when he wrote the Taj was already famous, though the Shway Dagôn was almost unknown. But however ignorant we may be of Lo Canigou, there is no escaping its beauty and its compelling influence once one has looked upon it. It inspires the lives of those who live within sight of it, and its memory never fades.

It has long been the theme of Catalan poetry, and has even an epic to itself—"Lo Canigo" of Verdaguer, of which Mistral wrote : "Canigo est la légende, la légende dorée, de votre merveilleux pays de Roussillon où les fées hantent encore les cimes blanches des montagnes. Verdaguer nous a chanté ce qu'elles font la haut, dans la langue précise, rhythmée et assonante de nos *Chansons de Geste*."

The latest of its poetic admirers is Rudyard Kipling, in whose verse we may hope that the immortal mountain may be enshrined for English hearts. Meanwhile he has allowed



THE SHIP AT THE SUMMIT OF LA LOGE,
PERPIGNAN (*page* 130)



PERPIGNAN AND THE CANIGOU (*page* 127)

me to transcribe here some of his own first impressions of it conveyed in a letter to M. George Auriol of Perpignan. This letter is already well known in its French version all over the Pyrénées-Orientales ; for in France such things are held of much account, and the visit of a Poet, of a man pre-eminent in letters, appeals more to the Département than that of all the crowds of distinguished and titled people who now frequent the Vernet waters.

"*I came here,*" *wrote Mr. Kipling,* "*in search of nothing more than a little sunshine. But I found Canigou, whom I discovered to be a magician among mountains, and I submitted myself to his power. At first he could reproduce for me, according to the thought or the desire of the moment, either a peak of the Himalayas or the outlines of certain hills in South Africa which are dear to me; transporting me, for example, to the still heat and the unforgettable smell of the pines behind my house under Table Mountain, at the instant when I expected to hear the horns of some Hindu temple upon his upper slopes.*

"*But this year he has taken to himself his own place in my mind and heart, and I watch him with wonder and delight. Nothing that he could do or give birth to would now surprise me, whether I met Don Quixote himself riding in from the Spanish side, or all the chivalry of ancient France watering their horses at his streams, or saw* (*which each twilight seems quite possible*) *gnomes and kobbolds swarming out of the mines and tunnels of his flanks.*

"*That is the reason, my dear Monsieur Auriol, that I venture to subscribe myself among the number of the loyal subjects of Canigou.*"

Perhaps, after this, it were well to leave the splendid mountain to tell its own tale. Perhaps it were well to bear in mind Chateaubriand's cry of disillusionment : "*Les montagnes partagent le sort de toutes les grandeurs. Il ne faut pas les voir que de loin.*" Perhaps it were best if the great mountain were jealously sealed and forbidden to the access of men, that so it might retain its magic influence and stand apart from material joys.

But the days when such things were possible have gone by. The Canigou is open to anyone who cares to climb the 9,000 feet to its summit; and there is even a company in

Perpignan, inspired by a Swiss engineer, whose aim it is to run a funicular railway from the hotels at Vernet to its summit.

Let us take facts as they are; for even the facts of the Canigou are still attractive, and from the vine-covered plain it must ever retain its immemorial beauty.

It may be reached from Prades, the little Roman town in the Valley of the Tet; or from Vernet, which lies at its very feet. Both roads meet at a certain point, and one can drive a carriage either way to the Hut of Balatg and the Châlet of the Alpine Club, which stands upon a superb belvedere 7,000 feet above the visible sea. Thence, in summer, it is an easy climb to its top. In winter, when its sides are white with snow, the "ascencion du Canigou" becomes a marvellous feat for the Tartarins of the South; but in truth it is an easy mountain to reach along the recognized path, and I have known a little English girl of eleven to march up it on a January morning.

My own visit to it was paid on a July day, when the sun was piping hot in the valleys, and the last snow had long since left its pinnacle. We drove in a carriage past Corneilla and Fillols, along a rough road that might be improved, to the Hut of Balatg. Below us as we climbed lay the red roofs of Fillols, embosomed in noble trees and set about with orchards and corn-fields, the peasantry busy at work binding the sheaves and carting them away.

As we reached the top of the ridge, there lay Taurinya and the whole Valley of the Riberetta, with the shattered old abbey of St. Michel de Cuxa standing forlorn, yet proud, amidst its terraced fields. All the way up we had it in view, mingled in our thoughts with memories of its chequered life of nine hundred years. Ascending still, we came in view of Prades, the little town of the mountain, set far below us in the spacious meadows which first gave it its name.

At Balatg we left the bare hillsides and entered a noble forest of dark fir-trees, passing through it, amidst scenery of surpassing grandeur and beauty, to the Châlet of the Alpine Club. Here were miles of rhododendrons in rosy bloom, and the mighty mountain masses rose above us, golden with hanging meadows of buttercups, and dark with trees.

Reaching the Châlet, we walked up to the mouth of the glacier, past little shallow tarns as lucent as silver, a running stream, vast cataracts of stone, and open glades of grass-land ideal for a camping ground. Here a herd of izard came bounding swiftly across the chaos of rocks, marvellously skilful in their passage, and after making a wide semicircle, and often stopping to look and wonder at us, passed away into the inner fastnesses of the mountain. These are the last of the Pyrenean chamois which once made the Canigou their home. The pressure of civilization is fast driving them away from this mountain, and when the Swiss engineer with his funicular arrives, the traveller here will no more see the display of agility and grace to which we were treated this day.

The izard loves the mountain solitudes and the flying snow under his hoofs, and where there is no solitude and no snow there is no izard. The country people, impressed by the shy and exclusive ways of this little animal, declare that his only provender and drink is snow. In winter he descends to the skirts of the high villages, but in summer he makes the most remote solitudes his home, and we were fortunate to have seen this little herd at the Châlet. It is in summer that the izard is shot, at dawn and in the cool evening, when he is roving abroad; for at mid-day the glacier-edge and the most secluded parts of the mountain are his resting-place, and he is not then to be tempted away. The young are born at the end of April, and within forty-eight hours have gathered strength to follow their parents in flight across the mountain slopes.

Here, about the Châlet of the Alpine Club, is a country in which one might camp in summer for days together, always moving and always finding some fresh resting-place, amidst scenes of wonderful beauty and quiet joy. It is a place of marvellous stillness; one does not hear the sound of any birds singing, for there are none, and the strange silence is almost unbroken. In still weather there is no wind, and the waters of the shallow tarns are smooth as glass. The meadows are rich with green turf embroidered with dark-blue gentians, and embossed with acres of pink rhododendron in bloom. It is a marvellous country, in which a man might steep his spirit in solitude, sleeping out these summer nights

under the stars, bathing by day in the warm and shallow waters, and lying for hours amidst the rhododendrons, cushioned upon the soft green banks. Here he might live alone with Nature, like Thoreau, seeing the sun rise each morning over the blue rim of the Mediterranean, the sun set across the vast mountain spaces of the high Pyrenees, and the last of the izard, unaware of his presence, come stepping proudly and daintily down the tumult of the rocks, while feeling above him always the great presence of the Canigou, symbol of the living God.

Here, upon such a summer night as we spent in the precincts of the Châlet, he might see the crescent moon riding high above the eastern ridge of mountains, the red glow of sunset still lingering in the west, and every star shining large and luminous in the dome of heaven above him; the interior valley of the glacier, wrapped in a sapphire haze, a very Faeryland of haunting beauty.

And if he did so, he would assuredly understand what the people mean when they attribute to the Canigou the home of the mountain Fays; he would rejoice in the inspiration of Verdaguer, and enter with a new feeling into that song which every Catalan of this country-side knows by heart, and never hears in a foreign land without intense emotion:

"Montanyas regaladas
Son Las del Canigo."

BOOK III

THE ROUSSILLON, OR THE WINDY PLAIN

CHAPTER I

PERPIGNAN, THE CAPITAL CITY

PERPIGNAN—NOTRE DAME GATE

PERPIGNAN is a town with an interesting past, a future that glows with promise, and a present that is prone to disappoint one. To those who live near it and know something of its inner life, its previous record, it is a place of fascination; to the Catalans of France it looms up with the air of a metropolis; but those who come upon it without an introduction are apt to pass it by without emotion, remembering it only, perhaps, as a dingy town swept by a dust-laden wind which played havoc with their eyes and filled their mouths with grit. It lacks the noble air, the stately outlines, of its next neighbour, Gerona; the mournful beauty of Elne; the proud sentiment of a Spanish city.

For the rest, it is one of those towns which has not yet thrown off the Middle Ages or wholly accepted the twentieth century. It is in a state of transition. Its beautiful old ramparts are going, or have gone, but nothing adequate has yet come to take their place. The faubourgs are incomplete. Streets end suddenly in rubbish-heaps, and highly-

decorated stucco houses, destined to form part of an alignment, stand alone and gaunt with their corner-stones waiting to be united to those of houses yet to come. The River Basse, which of old flowed under its red ramparts and under mediæval walls, pursuing its irregular course, has been trained in a wide straight channel, which for the better part of the year is large beyond its needs, and choked with weeds and nettles and the careless rubbish of a Southern town. It could be made beautiful, this little stream of water, which upon a clear day seems to bear down upon Perpignan from the very heart of the blue snow-crested Canigou; but beauty for some reason has passed it by. A stony pavement, to serve as the base of a gilded café, has been built over a part of it; iron bridges, grey and brutal, span it unashamed, beside a soft old bridge of the Middle Ages; and its concrete banks are plastered with *affiches* shouting out the merits of poisonous *apéritifs* and other refuse of civilization. This is the Quai Sadi Carnot, an unworthy monument to a great son of France. Time and civic pride will doubtless amend these things, but for the present one must look elsewhere for what is best in Perpignan; one must enter the heart of the old Spanish town, with its dark and narrow streets, twisting like a fugitive who would escape from a pursuing enemy, or like a citizen seeking relief from the pitiless mistral which scourges them with its sanitary wrath. One must find one's way into its old houses with their great doorways, and silent Spanish *patios*, and gardens hidden within their jealous walls. One must enter the solemn old cathedral of St. Jean, and take part in its majestic ritual, or of an evening follow the gathering crowd into the grand avenue of plane-trees, now a hundred years old.

This Avenue des Platanes is characteristic of Perpignan and of these children of the South. It is composed of three magnificent aisles, vaulted with green-gold shade. Of an evening here the sun glows along them and amidst the intricate tracery of their foliage, and one is seized at once with the conviction that he is entering a great natural cathedral, the counterpart under the sun, of the solemn aisles perfumed with incense, and lit with the tall wax tapers, which

OLD PEASANT WOMAN KNITTING IN THE FIELDS AT CASTELL' NOU

THE CHÂTEAU OF CASTELL' NOU (*page* 146)

the mediæval spirit evolved for the better contemplation of the great mysteries. Here are played out the lively scenes of the carnival, a very riot of materialism, with its flower battles and clouds of coloured confetti and all the brave music of the sensuous life. "Les Platanes" is a phrase ever on the lips of the people of this city; and their passing from winter to the resurrection of spring, their glorious death each autumn, and every incident of their life throughout the year, is recorded with a glow of enthusiasm in the columns of the Perpignan journals, while no mention is ever made of the ceremonies of the time-honoured cathedral of St. Jean. The South, ever divided in its allegiance between paganism and Christianity, has set its face determinedly once more towards the material joys of life, the green aisles under the glowing sun, and the laughing music of Pan. This superb natural cathedral ends with a singular fitness in a sort of secular high-altar, a monument commemorating the war of 1870. It looks like an emblem of victory, with its fine figure holding out a crown; and it stands here for the pride of a great people who have known adversity, and have borne it well. All over France you will see these beautiful symbols of a race that has been beaten, but still glows with life, and dreams one day of recovering its heritage of honour.

Hard by the Avenue of Planes stands the old Castillet, lifting its massive walls of perfect brick above the gate of Notre Dame. It is a relic of the Middle Ages, of the days of the Free Companies, of Bertrand du Guesclin and the Black Prince, and of Peter the Ceremonious, who ruined the kingdom of Majorca and deprived Perpignan of her title of a royal capital. It was built about the year 1368 as an additional protection to the town against the roving bands and mercenaries by whom this border country was infested, and as a means of strengthening the hold of Aragon. It is of red brick, superbly built, and it stands here in haughty isolation amidst the advancing tides of modern life. It overlooks the Officers' Club and the Café de la Paix, where the French infantry throng; and of an evening the regimental band plays here, and the citizens crowd together under its red towers. Here, and at the Loge de la Mer, there centres,

as of old, the civic life of Perpignan. One has but to walk a few steps across to the Place de la Loge, to find oneself at all times in the midst of a lively and animated throng. The Midi takes life joyously, and anyone who dropped in here by chance between twelve and two might carry away the impression that no one in Perpignan had anything to do but drink and laugh and talk and gesticulate with an abounding vitality. As summer advances, the wide awnings of the cafés make a deep shade, the cobbled street is watered and kept cool, and the green palms glint along the narrow street.

Here, as a quiet observer, one may study at leisure the Catalan character, and come to like the frank-heartedness, good-fellowship, and genial habits, of the race. Here, also, one is in the midst of their ancient buildings: the Hôtel de Ville, with its old thirteenth-century front and its inner Spanish court; the Palace of the Deputacion, with its beautiful Catalan archways of cut stone and its *svelte* windows of marble, so slender that they might be formed of steel; the Gothic Loge de la Mer, with its iron ship still proudly outlined against the blue sky, in testimony to the maritime fame of the Catalans of the Middle Ages. The great cafés over the way mark the site of the old woollen markets, where the rich cloths of Perpignan were sold and shipped to the Orient. Into the Salle Arago in the Loge one passes from the hilarity and abounding life of the streets and cafés to a noble room hung with vast pictures, which silently yet eloquently remind one of the historic past of this people. Here is Hannibal, the proud conqueror, dark and beautiful, facing the yellow-haired Gaul under the walls of Ruscino; and here is the old King John of Aragon, with his flowing beard and shining armour and sword aloft, swearing before the high-altar of St. Jean to defend Perpignan to the death. The scene commemorates an incident in the war between France and Spain in the year 1473, when Perpignan, true to her Spanish character, sustained a siege that foreshadowed Saragossa. These are pictures which Perpignan owes to the genius of M. Henri Perrault.

In this same old building of the Loge one often comes upon that typical episode in modern French life—the civil marriage. Glancing in at a half-open door, one sees the

Mayor and his clerk, and the pretty bride in her white veil and satin gown, and a small group of half-supercilious men (for marriage has lost its glamour in France) clustered about the bridegroom—*rangé*, as they say, at last—while in the rest of the Loge the ordinary secular life goes forward. Upon its ground floor the old grey Gothic arches are tricked out with cheap coloured panes, and the fine hall is used as a public café. The Catalan pride does not show itself in any concern for the dignity or beauty of these historic buildings, which are worthy of more consideration.

From the Place de la Loge one passes, like the married couples pass, to the quiet square which fronts the Cathedral of St. Jean, and here, as if by a magic transition, one is wrapt in the solemn gloom and stately ceremonies of mediæval life. The cathedral dates back to the years when Perpignan was a royal city, and an inscription upon a pillar as one enters records the laying of its first stone by "Our Illustrious Sovereign Lord Don Sancho, King of Majorca, the fifth of the Calends of May, 1324." Here is the soul of Perpignan, and these solemn walls, this majestic interior, have witnessed the most splendid episodes, the humblest details, in the life of its people.

Outside there is the white sunlight beating down upon the cobbled square; the great bell in the open belfry overhead is tolling, filling the very air with its solemn music. A few people go hurrying by—the small congregation of the faithful in this city of pagan joys. Inside, as one enters, one is launched at once into the mysteries of the mediæval Church. Upon the high-altar a spectral hand moves slowly amongst the tapers, lighting up each one against the gloom. In the choir the singers in scarlet and lace assemble, each one kneeling in homage as he passes before the altar steps. The padded doors open and shut each moment as the congregation gathers, and the long lines of chairs are rapidly added to as each new entrant takes one from the mass behind and places it in line. From a side-chapel, while all this is afoot, there steals through the mighty nave a low susurrus of voices in prayer, and, looking across the mighty nave, one can see a small group in the darkness, their faces lit with the flickering candles, as in a picture of Van Dyck's. And still

the bell goes on tolling, and one feels that this is but the prelude to a majestic ritual that is to come, with the entrance of Someone for whom all seem waiting.

Or again, it is a sunlit day, and the cathedral porch is heavily draped with black, and a hearse waits patiently without. Within, upon a high bier, uplifted in the centre of the cathedral near the altar, is the coffin of a dead woman, covered with white satin and set about with lighted tapers. The whole of the chancel and the apse of the cathedral behind the altar, up to a great height, is hung with black, upon which white tears bespeak the pity of the scene, and a white cross that fascinates the eye tells of an immortal hope. The organ blows its rich and solemn music through the aisle, and the noble old church responds within to the transitions from light to shade, and light again, which are going on without. For one moment all is wrapt in gloom, and the next there is a glowing light as the sun shines out afar off behind the clouds. It is a boisterous day outside, the mistral blowing in loud and explosive gusts; but it is tranquil here, and still with the peaceful stillness of death.

Near the great front door an old man stands, bent and sorrowful, fingering his rosary, his lips in prayer. . . .

When the service is over, the pall-bearers in black hats advance with the bier, the acolytes and priests in black and white vestments; and the soft-footed nuns, holding waxen tapers, follow behind. With the last burst of the organ triumphant, they all pass out into the white light beyond; the funeral bell tolls, and the service is over.

When the cathedral is empty, the verger comes like a shadow and puts out the tapers one by one, and removes the sombre covers from off the chairs of the chief mourners. As the light glows through the windows it falls in pools of vivid colour on the floor, awakening the dusty marble into life.

Or, again, the great church, with all its historic memories, is empty, and there enters in the still silence a priest, followed by a small group in whose midst there is a new-born child. One can see them there in a little circle about the ancient font of the Visigoths, with its old Latin formula—

"Necat anguis sibila sontis
Unda sacri fontis"

—of the wicked snake and the waters of salvation. The tapers shed soft patches of light on this small group of people, and the priest murmurs his incantation; yet you would hardly know that there was either light or voice in the dark solemn interior, were it not for the sudden piping cry of the awakened child.

Old and stately as is this cathedral, wrapt in its mediæval airs, there was a time when to the people of Perpignan it must have stood for the last word in modern achievement. One has but to pass through a small door, concealed in one of the chapels at the north side of the nave, to enter the far older basilica of St. Jean-le-Vieux, which was itself preceded by a primitive chapel that stood here in the earliest days of Christianity in the Roussillon. The pomp and the splendour of the cathedral are lacking here; the floor of the church is dust; the high-altar has vanished, making room for old broken chairs and other derelict rubbish. There is no glow here of waxen tapers and stained glass, no breath of warm incense filling the perfumed air. It is cold here and grey, with the chilling silence of the tomb. This is the old Perpignan that is dead and gone; and upon one side of it there is the cathedral itself now dying, and upon the other the smoking chimneys and strident growing life of the factories, known as the Cité Bartissol.

The cathedral is nearly always open, and one can enter it by the great porch, and leave it by the small south door, in the course of many a journey through the town, always finding something in its rich and solemn interior to comfort or delight one, to make one pause and wonder on the mystery of life and death, so arresting and impressive is its contrast with the luminous world without. The south door opens also, upon one of those silent ways that live their quiet life in the shelter of great churches. Here the dappled sunlight falls through majestic plane-trees upon the cobbled street, and the poor and the maimed, and those who are blind, assemble in hopes of alms. It is a different world to that of

the new Faubourg de la Gare, with its screaming trams and unattractive houses; and still greater is the contrast if one enters the chapel of the Dévot Crucifix, where, in the sombre recess behind the altar, there hangs a terrible figure of the dead Christ. Here is something that is not even European, so relentless is its cruel realism, so dark, Spanish, Oriental, is its character. The devout linger here in ecstasies of pity and grief, and even the indifferent and secular are sharply reminded of what the agony of the Crucifixion must have been. At Easter this impressive figure is brought down from on high, and exposed upon the floor of the chapel, and thousands come from all over the Roussillon to look upon it, to keep their vigil beside it, and to kiss in adoration the blood-stained feet.

A few paces farther on one is confronted by a high wall and by a majestic doorway which opens into the courtyard of the gendarmerie. This was once the cemetery of St. Jean, where for centuries the dead of Perpignan found burial. Behind the bare forbidding barracks one can still see along the high walls the escutcheoned tombs of those who sought a more noble and permanent resting-place. But time and irony have overtaken them also; their escutcheons and heraldic devices are worn, their tombs have been rifled and desecrated, and the proudest and most beautiful part of the old cemetery is now put to the basest and vilest uses. . . . France, you see, has broken with her past.

Perpignan, when all is said, is not one of those beautiful old towns like Gerona to which one goes for the sheer happiness of seeing it; for the Catalans, except for a few years under their Majorcan Kings, have never been other than a rude and provincial people; yet, if one is there, it can yield one many a pleasant hour. Some of its old houses are especially charming, by reason of their beauty and of the glimpse they offer into the domestic life of a bygone age. At the corner of the Rue des Abreuvoirs is the house in which Philip the Hardy lay dead after his disastrous crusade against Peter of Aragon in 1283. Upon the wall of its inner court, at the head of the stairs, are emblazoned in yellow and purple tiles the arms of the Marquis of Llupia, who is now a Spanish subject; but for

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CASTELL' NOU CHURCH AND VALLEY OF ILLE (*page* 159)

centuries the Llupias were a great house in the Roussillon, and heirs to the Viscounts of Castell' Nou. Outside the house there are traces of the massive iron chain which was placed across the street to prevent the advance of horsemen. Next door, all unsuspected by the stranger passing down the street, is another ancient house, with a beautiful *patio* and pointed Gothic arches, and ceilings of carved and painted wood. In the Rue de la Main de Fer, rising magnificently above its narrow space, there is the old Gothic house of the Union. One can see at a glance that it was once a great house, from its rich windows and its superb doorway of cut stone. It was built for a rich citizen of Perpignan in the late style of the sixteenth century, and must have presented a very animated scene when, having passed into the hands of the Llupias, it was occupied by the Queen-mother during the visit of Le Roi Soleil to Perpignan in 1660.

The rough Catalans and their old Spanish town left but an unfavourable impression on the polished French Court. The Duchesse de Montpensier roundly abused Perpignan as a "*très vilaine ville.*" "The men and women," she wrote contemptuously in her journal, "dress like Spaniards and live in the same fashion. Their houses are Spanish, and can boast of but one chimney, and that is in the kitchen." The Court was detained here by heavy rains in the month of April; the rivers were in flood, the streets wet and heavy with mud, and the weather was cold. La Grande Demoiselle had to take her cold feet to the kitchen to warm them, and betrayed her indignation. The citizens gave a ball in the royal honour in the large hall of the Loge de la Mer, but the petulant Princess was not to be appeased. "It was a desperately dull affair," she vowed; "there was but one violin, and a medley of all sorts of instruments, including even a hurdy-gurdy and a sort of iron triangle with rings attached to it, which they struck with a bit of iron, such as you see blind men with. I am not sure that it doesn't call itself a cymbal. The men wore cloaks and swords." Her cold feet and her Parisian outlook made her very scornful; but we may be sure the Catalans enjoyed themselves hugely and found everything very, very good.

The house contains some fine rooms with vaulted and

keyed ceilings and ornamented doors, and a beautiful inner garden court, which helps one to realize the security and peace enjoyed by the good citizen who built it, when once his great door closed on the outer world behind him. Here there is no sound but the faint music of trickling water, and even the searching mistral can scarce find an entrance. Its floor is flagged with tiles, and above it, cut square by the walls of the houses, is the blue sky, against which a tufted pine spreads out to the light. There is an arbour or pergola at one end, with a seat placed invitingly under it, and altogether here is a place to step into if one is contemptuous of Perpignan and inappreciative of its charm. There are other old houses like this, which have somewhat declined from their ancient greatness, in the Rue du Théâtre, with quiet courts, and old marble well-heads, and massive stairways and arches; besides such as are still in the possession of old families who keep up a certain state. In Perpignan, as in Spain and in all Southern lands that have trafficked much with the East, the private life is somewhat jealously guarded; daughters live in a seclusion that an English or American girl would find asphyxiating, and the Prince Charming enters only by the regulation door of the carefully arranged marriage. There is thus a touch of the harem about some of these old houses, which look so uninvitingly out upon the street. But how attractive are the inner courts, the sheltered gardens with their great trees, the beautiful old rooms richly furnished and embellished with personal care! Here you will find some old lady, Spanish of mien and stately of gesture, who still presides over her son's house, and over the lives of her daughter-in-law and of her grandchildren; and old-fashioned servants who have the look of retainers. As you enter the hall by the great door to ascend to the *salon* on the upper floor, you will hear the horses moving their feet and whinnying beside you, and the low voices of the grooms at work; for the Spanish custom of lodging one's cattle on the ground floor still prevails in Perpignan. Upstairs you will find the master of the house ensconced, it may be, in his library, with its soft red-tiled floor and shelves laden with exquisitely-bound volumes and *objets d'art*, or, if the life of sport has enchanted him, enthusiastic over the medals and prizes won

by his horses at a recent show. Many of these old families still own vast landed estates and *métairies* rich with vines; though the saving instinct of France and the democracy of her people forbid much display, and wealth is more than half concealed.

Not so long ago, before the last of the long series of ruptures with her past which break, alas! the unity of France, the Bishop of Perpignan was one of her great dignitaries, the representative of a long line of prelates who, established once at Elne, played a considerable part in the history of the Roussillon. The episcopal palace was then an official residence. But the palace as such has ceased to exist, and the Bishop retains his authority by right of his personality rather than by that of his office. He lives now in a large house hired for the purpose, but with a fine open court before it, heavy with wistaria and full of marguerites. It has none but secular associations; and yet, so powerful is the tradition of the Roman Church, that the moment one enters its antechamber one is at once in another world. Here priests constantly enter and pass out, while many, fresh from their country parishes, sit waiting patiently for an audience. It is clear that one is under the roof of a great dignitary. You will find Monseigneur in his study, seated at his writing-table, some old and crabbed manuscript, perhaps, before him, translating it into polished French. For Monseigneur is a scholar. No one in the world talks more perfect French than he does, and its tone and clarity fall upon the ear, somewhat wearied by the rough Catalan brogue, like the music of a fountain. With his purple silk cap and his picturesque sash, his golden cross and the heavy ring upon his finger, his ascetic air and gentle but authoritative mien, he looks what he is, a Prince of the Church. Here is no bludgeon, but a delicate rapier of finely-tempered steel. Though not a Catalan, he invariably speaks of the Catalans as "we," and is an eloquent exponent of the racial character, which he understands and describes as only one not absolutely born to it could do. According to the Bishop, the Catalans are a people indomitable, rude, fierce, and proud, but frank and generous, and amenable to good influences—a people who require managing. While I was talking to

him one day, he gave me in his exquisite French a translation of the old Catalan oath as it was sworn in the Cortes of Aragon upon the accession of a new King. Here it is in all its rude simplicity: *Nous dont chacun vaut autant que toi, et tous réunis plus que toi, nous te jurons fidèlité si tu promets de garder nos libertés et nos coutumes; si non,* NON! Monseigneur Carsalade du Pont is but one of a long series of Frenchmen who, finding themselves in the midst of a foreign populace, have diverted themselves by studying its foibles and peculiarities. The Catalan, *enfin*, as old Carère wrote long ago, is quick to rebel against compulsion, but susceptible to flattery, and is as easily won by blandishments as he is driven into opposition by harshness and severity. The haughty old Church of Rome has learnt by sad experience that harshness and severity prevail not, either in Catalonia or in any other part of the Christian world; she is entering at last, perhaps, upon her true vocation, and in Monseigneur of Perpignan she puts forth the gently masterful hand.

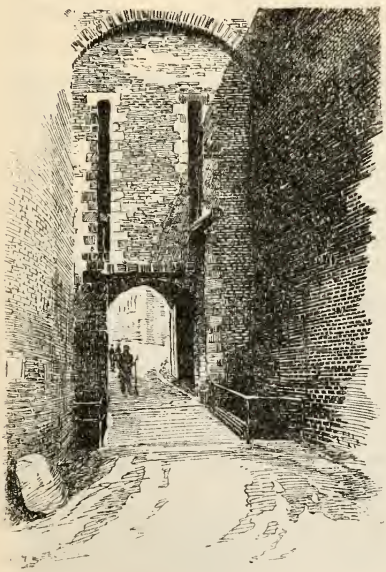
The Bishop is a man of taste and culture, with a love for the past, which he cherishes while keeping a watchful and very modern eye upon the events of the day. He has restored the Abbey of St. Martin du Canigou, invented a very profitable liqueur, and yielding to the last infirmity of noble men, he has built his own tomb up there in the abbey and decorated it with his arms and a remarkable bronze of himself moulded by the Catalan sculptor M. Gustave Violet of Prades. There is a copy of it in the town gallery of Barcelona, and you would never think, when coming upon it amidst old Spanish pictures of Cortez, and the Conquistadores, and Charles V. entering the monastery at Yuste, that this beautiful image of a mediæval Bishop has its living counterpart in Perpignan, in the person of Monseigneur, with his bright twinkling eyes, and clever ascetic face.

There is much more to be seen in Perpignan, in spite of its rather shabby appearance, than I have room to tell of here. There is the star-shaped Citadelle, once a Royal Palace, in which the Kings of Majorca lived in state, but now, alas! a prey to the military engineer; the royal chapel with its marble doorway, as perfect as anything of its kind in the Roussillon, but now used as a store-room for soldiers' boots and clothes; the old University of Perpignan, now a public library, with

its date-palm soaring up into the blue square of sky as though this were not Europe at all, but a corner of Africa; the Church of St. James where the light streams in in coloured fans from without into its dark interior; or—to turn to more commonplace things—the big factory where they make those little books of cigarette-paper marked "J◇B" and familiar all over the world, which have brought Monsieur Bardou-Job his fortune of over a million sterling; and the little restaurant down a dark alley which they call the "Lion d'Or," where an excellent lunch and the best of wine can be had when one has need of food and drink. But these the good traveller, with one of Pierre Vidal's scholarly handbooks under his arm, or, better still, with the help of some hospitable friend—and there are many such for those who care to look for them in Perpignan—can see for himself.

CHAPTER II

CASTEL ROSSELLO



PERPIGNAN—LA PORTE DU CANET

Out upon the windy plain, solitary and desolate, lies Rossello, buried under the dust of time. A pitiful hamlet and an old mediæval tower alone commemorate her past. Yet she has lived. More than 3,000 years ago, when the world as we think of it was still young, the Phœnician came sailing over the blue Mediterranean, and dropped anchor where the rich vinelands now glow in the southern light, and finding the shore propitious, displayed his beads and his bales to the wild Iberian and formed a trading settlement. It was he, perhaps, who gave to the land its name of Roussillon, or Rouskino. As time moved on, the

blue-eyed Gaul came down from his northern lands, and, pushing the dark Iberian before him, crossed the Tet at Bonpas and established his frontier town upon the rising ground where Rouskino stood. Here in that momentous year, 217 before Christ, while Hannibal was marching up the coast of Spain, the Roman envoys came and appealed to him to resist the advancing hero. We are told how the Roman envoys dwelt on the might and the power of Rome, and how the assembled Gauls murmured loudly at their haughty demands. For they were of no mind to fight the battles of Rome. After the Romans came Hannibal himself, and encamped with his host under the walls of Iberian Elne. The Gauls had everything to gain by letting him pass unmolested. His fame had preceded him, and his purpose was not to be stayed. Hannibal passed on under their astonished gaze, and Rouskino was left in peace.

But a hundred years later the Romans came back, and this time they came to stay. The old Phœnician settlement, the Gallic town, took on a Roman air and became Ruscino Latinorum, the centre here of Latin civilization. Of all that it was for 500 years, of its life from day to day during this long pacific period, no record survives save that which lies buried under the glinting vines which now spread over its surface. But one knows that it shared the fate of the rest of this province, yielding the civilization of which it was so proud, to the northern hordes, and falling like grass before a fire under the destructive onset of Islam. During the Middle Ages its fine commanding site made it a desirable possession, and it was fortified and held by several of the great families of the land—the Viscounts of Castell' Nou, of Fenollet and Oms. The old tower which alone marks it out from the surrounding plain is a survival of this period. Its battered, wind-driven walls commemorate, amidst the desolation which has overtaken this historic spot, the most tragic of all the old troubadour tales. Here, it is said, lived Saurimonde the beautiful, wife of the Lord Raimond of Castel Rossello. To her came the knightly troubadour, William of Cabestany, a neighbour and a gentleman, singing upon his lute, and inditing to her, after the manner of the times, verses eloquent with admiration and instinct with the

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AMELIE-LES-BAINS (*page* 170)

very love of love. How deeply they may have felt these outpourings, these old troubadours, is the sort of personal equation which even their contemporaries and those who knew them best must have found it hard to solve. The Lord Raimond was, at any rate, cast in too rude a mould to make any poetical allowances. Transported with rage and a jealousy that can have had no element of love in it, he fell treacherously upon his rival, and plucking his hot heart from his body, served it up as a dish for his wife to eat. When she had all unwittingly finished this horrible meal, he informed her of what she had done. The poor lady, calling her pride to her aid, heroically replied that, indeed, that of which she had eaten was so good that no other food would ever pass her lips. The maddened Count thereupon rushed out for his sword to kill her, and she, so lovely and proud and frail, fled before him, and threw herself from the battlements to the ground below. Ferocity such as this brought down upon Raimond of Castel Rossello, the detestation of all his contemporaries, and the just vengeance of his Sovereign Lord, Alfonso II. of Aragon, himself a gallant knight and troubadour. He was imprisoned and put to death, and his lands were made over to the heirs of Saurimonde and of her lover, William of Cabestany. The mortal remains of these unhappy lovers were buried in one tomb in the Cathedral of St. Jean of Perpignan, and every year the noble lords and ladies of the country came and testified their sympathy by joining in the solemn memorial service instituted by the King.

There are doubting people who will tell you that the dates do not correspond, and that this story of mediæval love and hate is told of other localities than Castel Rossello, yet the tale lives and is told, far and wide upon the countryside, by people who know nothing else of Castel Rossello; and one may still read in the soft old Provençal the glowing verses of William of Cabestany.*

* They have been translated into English verse by Mr. S. Baring-Gould as follows:

"Before my mind's eye, lady fair,
I see thy form, thy flowing hair,
Thy face, thy ivory brow.
My path to Paradise were sure,
Were love to God in me as pure
As mine to thee, I trow.

One day, tired of the sights and sounds of Perpignan, the clang of its tram-cars, and the havoc that precedes the conversion of old red walls and storied battlements into white cafés and modern stuccoed houses, I turned my back upon the aspiring little town, and rode out to look at Castel Rossello and dwell for an hour or two upon this place of memories. Leaving the great avenue of plane-trees, I found myself in the midst of the rich orchards and the vineyards and the olive groves which cover this glorious plain. On either hand there rose the purple Albères and the Corbières, with their sentinel watch-towers clear against the sky, while far out upon the embroidered plain were dotted the white farmhouses, the châteaux of the greater owners, and the dark pointing cypresses of the South. Here was a Mediterranean country, with something of the character of Greece and Italy and Spain in one. Every acre of it lay under cultivation, and the vines rayed out in their millions to the very limits of sight. Over all this opulent world of human industry, rich in historical associations and fraught with great memories, rose in sublime magnificence the gleaming, snow-clad mass of the Canigou, all the more noble and wonderful for being seen at a great distance across the intervening plain. Here was something that has never changed through all the human vicissitudes of thirty centuries, and the eyes of Phœnician and Greek, Roman and Carthaginian, Celt and Iberian, Saracen and Goth, looked precisely at that which dazzles and charms one to-day. From here a King of Majorca, looking out upon his kingdom spread before his

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"Perchance thou wilt not bend an ear,
Perchance not shed for me a tear,
For me, who in my prayer
To Mary Mother ever plead,
To stead thee in thy hour of need,
Sweet lady, passing fair.

"Together from first childish days,
As playfellows, I knew thy ways;
I served thee when a child.
Permit me but thy glove to kiss,
That, that will be supremest bliss,
Will still my pulses wild."

From "A Book of the Pyrenees," by S. BARING-GOULD.

eyes, must have felt it worth living for and fighting for and dying for. So it appears to one to-day; and centuries hence when the best of us has long since been forgotten, it will still glow in all its wonted beauty, an inspiration and a joy to men.

From the white highroad I turned aside into a narrow country lane, which winds unpretentiously amidst the vines. But it bears the proud name of Charlemagne, and marks one of the oldest highways of the world. Here ran the great Roman road which carried Cæsar from Rome to Cordova, and here, where its sandy pathway shelters under the high banks, Hannibal, as the country people will tell you, took his way to Rome. The vineyards which encompass it mark the site of the old Roman colony of Ruscino Latinorum. It is an upland site, falling sharply at the far end, where the old mediæval tower of Raimond of Castel Rossello stands, to the level plain, and blue winding channel of the Tet.

Castel Rossello is now a poor hamlet of a few rough houses, and there was not a soul there when I entered it. But there were brown rabbits in the hutches and poultry in the yard, and such other humble symptoms of domestic life. The rude old church with its double belfry was closed, and so much merged in the peasants' houses built about it that there was no visible entrance. One has to go down some way to a neighbouring farmhouse to get the key and ask its present owner to let one look over it. The tower stands on the very edge of the hill in a commanding and superb position, whence the most wonderful views of all the country-side expand. There far below me, as I stood, was the winding blue of the Tet, now but a short way from its exit to the sea. Beyond spread the vineyards and the closely-cultivated fields, the long lines of poplar avenues and planes, the white farmhouses, the grey dominant towers of village churches, and the purple outline of the Corbières. On the opposite side there was the same landscape, but lifted high above the river level, enriched by the presence of Perpignan, and exalted beyond all praise by the snowy pyramid of the Canigou. The sun set in the Pyrenees, and the whole of the distant mountain country of the Upper Tet, the white shining masses of the Cerdagne, were transfigured in the lustrous glow of the evening. South the Albères ran in their

serried beauty, a dividing wall between France and Spain to the sea's edge; and as I turned to the east, there, across the undulating vineland, lay the dark blue rim of the Mediterranean.

Here indeed is a splendid vantage-point, the very soil under one's feet stored with rich memories of the past. Monsieur Bigorre, the present owner of the old castellated *métairie* of Castel Rossello, walked with me along the sandy lane, and told me that in breaking up the land for his vineyards he found numberless fragments of ancient pottery and tiles, and coins and medals dating back to 1,600 years before Christ. The soil, he said, has to be finely sifted for the vines, and this process brings much to light that the plough would leave undiscovered. The lane runs at a lower level than the fields, and at intervals the section of yellow stony bank is varied with a wedge of grey ash, in which these relics of the past lie hidden. Monsieur Bigorre assured me that he had found over 4,000 coins and medals of every period, and we presently came upon some workmen excavating what it is thought may prove to be the ancient forum of Ruscino. Yet it struck me with amazement that the people of Perpignan, many of whom are rich, and some cultivated, should have left this historic spot so long unexplored, for it is evidently rich in remains, and enshrines the forgotten history of this people. Monsieur Bigorre, who has found so much by hazard, a by-product of his land, had nothing to show me, for he had distributed all he had found amongst his friends.

I have tried in the preceding sentences to record some details of my visit to Castel Rossello, but I have failed to convey the magic of the spot; the singular contrast between the rude hamlet of to-day and its storied and romantic past; the strange, one might even say the miraculous, indifference of those who live here to all who have gone before them; and the rich, luminous, beauty of the landscape. The dry air, the white sunlight, the sharp outlines of the hills, make for a certain clarity of vision which it is hard to recall. But when one is there some material screen seems to be drawn away from before the eyes, and all the past shines out and

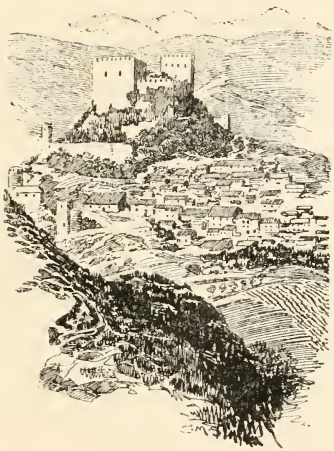
is made manifest. Perhaps the souls of all those who have gone this way still linger here and frequent this land, or maybe their bodies have left some *trace* which prevails upon the mind of the spectator. Certainly, whether for these or for more prosaic reasons, one should go out to Rossello and judge for one's self.

BOOK IV

CASTELL' NOU AND THE FOOT-HILLS OF THE ASPRES

CHAPTER I

THE CHÂTEAU OF A THOUSAND YEARS



CASTELL' NOU

All over the Eastern Pyrenees one sees the remains of old feudal castles crowning some mountain summit or some lonely hill, speaking eloquently of the bygone days when knights and cavaliers rode across the luxuriant plain and led their retainers to battle; yet in their very desolation now, ruined, ownerless, and forlorn, testifying to the great changes that have come over the land. The most notable of all these in its day was the strong château of Castell' Nou, and during the many years of its existence as a place of arms its history was entwined with that of the Catalan people. It was built towards the close of the tenth century, when the Count Oliba of the Cerdagne, whose name you will still find upon old parchment deeds at Puigcerda and Ripoll, left half his territory to his younger son, Bernard, Count of Besalu, whose surname of Taillefer is associated with many a gallant and noble action. The Count Bernard found his lands and his castles spread far and wide upon both flanks of the Pyrenees, and along the twin valleys of the Tech and Tet. He looked,

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PRATS DE MOLLO (*page* 174)

therefore, for a central and commanding spot whence he could control the whole of his vast territories. He found it in the wild rough watershed of the two valleys, amidst the foothills of the Canigou, which people call the Aspres, from their hard and rugged character, and his new *château-fort* became known as Castell' Nou. He had but to climb the great rock, which impends above the castle and bears the historic name of the Rocher de Majorque, to take in at one glance of the eye by far the greater part of his dominions, from the heights of Bellegarde and the time-honoured Col de Perthus to the green glinting plains of Millas and Ille. He was a great hero, was Bernard of Besalu, and he died in the year 1020, while swimming his horse across the rapid current of the Rhone. His eldest son, William, took the title of Viscount of Vallespir, which was changed into and became historic in after-years, as that of Viscount of Castell' Nou.

William I. and his descendants were great feudal lords, to whom there did homage for their fiefs in the grand hall of the castle, the masters of half the strong places of war from the far highlands of Capcir to Castel Rossello by the sea. These lords and barons followed the Viscount to war in Spain and Sardinia, in Sicily and the Balearic Isles, and to the far-distant shores of Asia. For ten generations the line of William, the first Viscount, was perpetuated at Castell' Nou, throwing up names famous in the annals of the Roussillon, such as those of Dalmau and Jazbert de Castell' Nou, until, at the death of the last male heir in 1321, the feudal power of the family passed to the Kings of Majorca, and men of another blood sat in the hall of the castle. In 1473 the Perillos, who now held it, stood out manfully for the King of Aragon against Louis XI., laying waste from their vantage-point the territories of Millas and Ille, which had declared for France. But the days of the château as a place of arms were already numbered. Once all-powerful by reason of its stupendous walls, and position impregnable to assault, it now lay at the mercy of anyone who could fire a gun at it from the Rocher de Majorque. In 1559 the mad audacity of its owner, Perot de Llupia, brought down upon it the wrath of the Governor of the Roussillon, who caused some artillery to be dragged up to the Rock, and battered it to

pieces in two days' cannonading. Henceforth it ceased to exist both as a *château-fort* and as a place of abode, falling more and more into ruin under the stress of time and the depredations of the neighbouring peasantry, till in the year 1876, it passed into the hands of the Vicomte de Satgé de St. Jean, and was converted, if not back into the old castle of Bernard Taillefer, into a romantic and very beautiful home. After the death of M. de Satgé de St. Jean, it was purchased by its present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Dunbar Jewett, who lavish upon it all the love and devotion of those for whom the past is full of inspiration.

I had long wished to accept the invitation of my friends to go out and see their old castle, whose history was familiar to me through books, when one day the opportunity came. The mistral, which had been blowing fiercely for some days, twisting the young plane-trees at Perpignan into agonized forms and searing the faces of even its most hardened sons, came suddenly to an end. It was a perfect sunlit morning in early May, the sky blue and clear, and the Canigou glowed like another Mont Blanc above the Place Arago, filling the whole vista of the entering Basse with its pride. The dappled highroad, arched over with a green roof of foliage, made straight for the centre of its blue and silver pyramid. Meadows stretched away upon either hand, a deep metallic green embroidered with flowers, and beautiful avenues of plane-trees, making perfect tunnels of shade, struck off from time to time across the plain. The country was richly watered, the long canals with their sparkling momentum giving it a great feeling of joyous life. The highway presently entered the historic town of Toulouges, where in 1041 a council of all the barons and temporal and spiritual lords of the Roussillon was held to promulgate the famous Trève de Dieu. It was hard to picture in this obscure little Spanish town, so full of dirt and a ragged sunlit disorder, the assembling of all those turbulent and stately personages. But a relic of those times survives in the old church of Toulouges, with its carved marble porch and mediæval tracery, upon the very edge of the road.

Thuir, a few miles farther on, is a thriving commercial

town overshadowed by the firm of Viollet Frères, who make one of those *apéritifs* which clamour for recognition and insist on being drunk all over France. The industry pays, and the proprietors rank amongst the commercial aristocracy of the land. At Thuir I found a fair in progress, and a light American buck-board sent down to meet me from the château. François, the driver, greeted me with a friendly warmth, and we were soon travelling slowly along the road to Castell' Nou, the deliberate mule between the shafts refusing to go forward at any pace other than that of his own choosing. The ancient Sequia Real of Thuir ran bubbling and sparkling by the roadside, and under the walls of an old convent that has seen many vicissitudes, and is still graced with a beautiful cypress-tree of perfect mass and outline, upon the crest of which each 14th of July someone is at the pains to affix the tricolour.

So far we had travelled across the level plain, but we now reached the edge of the foot-hills, the rough Spanish-looking Aspres, amidst groves of olives and patches of vine. There was a scent of thyme in the air, and gorse and broom flourished by the wayside. But the country seemed lonely and desolate to the last degree, like the Estremadura of Spain—far different to the intensely cultivated orchard and garden land of the *hortelani* about Perpignan, and the rich vine-embroidered plain. The road continued to ascend, suddenly yielding a beautiful view of the snowy blue heights of the Canigou, gleaming as in a Velasquez landscape above the brown foreground of the Aspres. Soon after I saw the small chapel of St. Martin de la Roca, daringly placed by the hands of mediæval workers, to whom toil seemed nothing, upon the steep crest of a stony isolated hill. The road now dropped downwards, revealing the entrancing vision of an old fortified castle, with its small dependent town clustering about it for protection. This was the Château of Castell' Nou, now, after its long long sleep of 317 years, come to life again. I saw it there upon its hill, with its garden of dark cypresses, its square primitive front and soaring outline, its encompassing walls and towers that reach down the hill-slope, like the old walls of Byzantium where they go to meet the Bosphorus, and I felt that I was looking back

through a magic mirror upon the Middle Ages. I saw it across a little valley of vineyards in perfect array, of velvet-green patches of cornland, and groves of ancient olive-trees, each of which threw its own separate shade—green upon green—on the tranquil corn below. It was a wonderful picture of a bygone age, without a false note to break its old-time harmonies.

Past the village church, which stands upon a little hill of its own, with some cypresses to lend it their unfailing distinction, the road reaches the fortified gate of the village, and then ascends by the side of the steep rock upon which the château is built. All this was bare and barren hillside till M. de Satgé came and planted his pine-wood and other beautiful trees, which now shelter the steep approach. Of old, too, there was no road here. The castle stood haughty and aloof, the only approach to it being the rough bridle-path cut out of the rock, which still exists as a reminder of a rude age. Upon this path the people of the countryside were content to do their wayfaring for nine hundred years, till Mr. Jewett generously threw open his private drive up to the castle to public use. An iron *grille* now marks the entrance to the private grounds, where upon the forbidding soil there have been made to grow deodars and cypresses and many other dark and lovely trees; young almonds, which bloom while the snow is yet upon the ground; lilies and laburnums heavy with blossom, masses of the common purple flag, may like driven snow, and figs and cacti and tamarisks. Flights of wide flagged stairs, like those at Mont St. Michel, ascend through all this beauty, yielding great views through the battlements of the surrounding country: the wide plain of the Roussillon, with a glimpse of the Mediterranean beyond; the Valley of the Tet, where Millas glints amongst its plane-trees; the dividing hills, with their cork-woods and patches of cultivation, that lie between Castell' Nou and its old subject valley of the Upper Tech; and the bare majestic Rocher de Majorque, which rises steeply above the château, dominating it completely. All about the grounds and upon the battlemented stairs there are huge stone balls, relics of mediæval war.

Under the yellow wall of the church, near its ancient doorway, sheltered by the impenetrable green of a cypress from the hot sunlight, one can sit at peace and look across to where there rises straight and clear against the blue sky the old château with its battlemented walls. The Rocher de Majorque sweeps down to it magnificently on the east, faint traces of the fortifications, put there in later years to protect it from assault, still visible along its summit. It is a grim and majestic neighbour, superb in its bare isolation, and unchanged since the first builder laid here his daring foundations. No one ever thought then that guns would be invented, and that the great *château-fort* of Castell' Nou would lie wholly at its mercy.

Near the château now there is a pine-wood, and below it in the valley foreground there are green cornfields, with the wind blowing in shining waves across them. The cuckoo's music breaks across the valley, and summer is in the laden air. The sun beats fiercely down, and one feels that it might attain here to a tropical fury; but elevation and latitude and the nearness of the sea hold its fires in check. In winter there is snow and there are nights of frost. The castle stands on a solitary hill, in a circle of mountains, and when one is here the world of cities and of trafficking men seems far away and unreal. So profound is this suggestion that one comes upon the village mairie, with its familiar monogram R.F., with a start. One had forgotten that this was France, and that this country had any other name than Castell' Nou.

In the days of the great Viscounts, when men-at-arms were constantly upon the road, and knights and barons assembled here to render homage in the great hall of the castle, Castell' Nou was the centre of a world, and its master a great man who could never forget his state and dignity. But now, when the tides of life flow elsewhere, and the old château has lost its power, one might live here forgotten of the world and free from every tie. It is become a place remote and apart, a dream of the Middle Ages.

The Rocher de Majorque.—In the early summer dawn the red ball of the sun appears above the edge of the Rocher de

Majorque, and looks as if it might roll down its steep incline to the plain below; for the rock, when you are under it, is a formidable neighbour, whose magnificence and bulk impress and transform the imagination. Yet it has more than bulk; it lives and changes from hour to hour, and it passes, in response to variations in the atmosphere, through successive migrations of colour. In the full sunlight it is a hot yellow-brown of the typical Mediterranean hue; when the clouds advance it turns from a pale grey to blue, to a darker purple; and at evening its face at sunset glows in colours that range from lilac to a deep rose. Then it is like the Mokattam Hills at the hour of evening prayer—a Divine instrument.

Across its vast surface wander flocks of sheep, moving in the distance like a living carpet, but nearer at hand like water as it flows gently and irresistibly over a new surface; their feet twinkling, their tails moving, their bodies touched with glancing light. When a storm threatens they come hurrying back, crowding along the narrow mountain-path like a beaten army, bleating and filling the air with their plaints, while the shepherd hastens after them, his cloak about him, and his dog barking loudly at their heels. Overhead the grey clouds sweep yet more swiftly along, the thunder breaks at intervals, and the peaceful idyll of the mountain-side is suddenly accelerated, like some tragic drama hurrying to its conclusion.

Yet an hour later, when the storm is over and gone, and the air is laden with the scent of the rain-washed earth, and all the world is once more at peace, you will find them there upon the lower slopes hard by the village, once more grazing placidly, and reflecting in their very attitudes the general peace. The rain meanwhile has clarified and renewed the beauty of the world. The valley, with its cornfields and olive groves, lies very green at foot; beyond it spread the plains of Ille and Millas, and the enclosing mountains, cut like purple cameos till all trace of their contours is lost in the effulgence of the glowing west. Behind the château, above its lofty battlements, rise the blue and silver crests of the Canigou, wonderfully contrasted with the green hills that swell halfway between.

Rain, when it comes here to this dry and stony land, comes in tumult and with loud sound. A thunderstorm in spring is a terrifying experience. The lightning flashes, the thunder roars, and the hail comes down in white sheets, splashing and bounding along the battlements and along the iron sides of the mountain. At intervals there are loud explosions like shots from a rifle. The Rocher de Majorque looms up magnificently into the storm, and within a few minutes cataracts of dun water come racing down its precipitous flanks. Mighty and immovable as the great rock appears, each flood of rain subtracts something from its life, deepening the furrows in its face, and marking its claim to eternity with the spirals and finger-marks of destroying Time.

From here, from the battlements of the castle, one sees the life of a little French commune spread out at one's feet. It is like looking at a human map. First there is the village itself, shut in within its ancient walls, and those who live here have been content to remain on for a thousand years upon the same site, in the same houses, within the same little narrow environment. The population has ebbed and flowed, but it has never gone beyond these ancient walls. The days when men had perforce to cluster closely together for defence and self-protection have long since gone by; the old *château-fort* which gave them protection has for 500 years ceased to fulfil its ancient purpose; but the people stay on, with the deep ingrained tenacity of the European peasant, as seemingly immovable (yet how easily annihilated!) as the great Rock of Majorca towering so mightily above them. There are families who claim to have been here since the first days when the château was built; and the old blood flows on in spite of time, and disaster, and every political change. It is a wonderful sequence when one thinks of all that has happened upon the great windy highway beyond, where cities have fallen into dust and army after army has passed upon its desolating way. The château, with its noble outline and its newer beauties—its roses, its lilies, and all the little delicacies of modern life—soars above the village in conscious superiority; but, in truth, the hard old village is the master, and in its blood there is the tenacity that defies

even Time himself. So that one can only look down upon it from the battlemented walls with a profound respect.

It is surrounded by little fields of corn, and groves of olives, and serried acres of vines, all of which are owned by the peasant proprietor. Every man in this humble village has his share in the land, his profound interest in the fields about him. That green cornfield upon whose face the wind waves are racing, that hillside blossoming with golden broom, that almond-tree laden with the downy fruit of the year, each one of those shining poplars by the stream, speaks to some man or woman in the village, of what is his own. It has its personal history for him, linked in his soul with intimate memories of those who have gone before him.

When one thinks of the vast plains, of the *latifundia* of the Russian landlord, the dusty tracts of Asia so contemptuous of the individual life, one feels that here is the Utopia of the peasant, an ideal for the whole world, since it recognizes the dignity of each human soul, and makes infinitely strong and enduring the innermost fibre of a nation.

When one comes to know these people more intimately, to read the human story of each man's life, one realizes how worthy they are of what fate has given them. In this small community there flourish great qualities: economy which puts to shame the careless extravagance of our own people; a deep-seated and unconquerable love of liberty; industry which brings them out into their fields at dawn, and finds them there at sunset, and is interrupted only by death; such self-respect that they can never receive a favour without wishing to make a prompt return.

Every child here learns to read and write, and from time to time the little village throws up a representative into the upper classes of his country. At the gate one day I saw an old man seated on the wall, his wife beside him, both bearing upon them visibly the marks of a hard life of toil, of poverty even, but both full of courage and self-respect. They have a son, now a Captain in the French army. He came here not long since, in his fine uniform, with his bride, who was arrayed in the pretty fineries of another class. They lodged here with this old peasant man and woman, who knew how to receive with dignity such richly-attired folk. The son at least was

FORT ST. ELME, FROM A GATE OF COLLIOURE (*page* 183)

THE CASTLE OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLARS, COLLIOURE (*page* 180)

happy to be under his father's roof, the immemorial home of his people; and the village schoolmaster was filled with pride at seeing again so prosperous an old pupil. But the village stood aloof and defiant. It felt in its innermost heart that its own dignity was challenged, and it was resolved to make its own equality plain.

There is a wonderful sensitiveness under the hard exterior of the French peasant. These, one must never forget, are the people who conquered Europe under Napoleon, who were inspired by his eloquent appeals, and could understand the claim of the thirty centuries that looked down upon them from the Pyramids of Egypt. I was driven up from Thuir by as hearty and powerful a man as one need wish to employ on hard and laborious work. He is the mainstay of the château, one of those men who require no supervision and seem to rejoice in toil. When I came to know François better, I learnt that he was so moved by the death of his cousin, who died a horrible death under the wheels of a wine-cart, that for fifteen months his health completely gave way. He could take no food but milk, and was reduced to a shadow. This man, who might fell an ox, lay as feeble as a child under the stress of a personal emotion.

Here, as elsewhere in French Catalonia, one is impressed with the vigour and beauty of the race. As to looks, there are girls, even in this little village who delight one's eyes by their beauty and abounding grace and vitality; and there are young men of superb appearance. One of these is a blonde shepherd who might have served as a model for Praxiteles himself.

One afternoon I walked along the mountain-paths, in the warm sunlight, and sat on the slope of a hill, covered with scented thyme and gorse and flaming broom, and saw the wind racing over the green cornfields, and the people hay-making in the fields. One of these was an old man of nearly eighty, who, at death's door a fortnight ago, was now working alone in his beautiful field, gathering together, perhaps for the last time, the harvest of this May. All about him lay in the evening sunlight his perfectly cultivated acres: here a

patch of corn, there a bit of vineland in its patterned beauty, at one end his *potager* with its trim rows of peas and onions and other good vegetables, a very different thing to the careless allotments of England. In the bottom of the ravine, where the trees cluster thickly, glinted his cistern of clear water, a spring of life in this thirsty land. Presently, as the shadows grew longer, veiling the bright fields and the bending figure of the old man, the sun dropped behind the superb hill upon which there stands, with its belfry *à jour*, the little chapel of St. Martin. The sky was radiant with wonderful shafts of light, and the village church-bell tolled out with deep melody in the stillness of the rural air. The old man labouring on in his fields seemed to me symbolical of his race and class, the very type of the peasant proprietor of France.

Since the downfall of the Church, the schoolmaster has taken the place of the *Curé* in the village commune. He stands for reason and enlightenment, and is the moulder of the youth of France. At Castell' Nou he is a potent personality. It were difficult to convey the electric activity of this little man's mind and body. He arrives, when invited to the château, charged with batteries of conversation, as though he had fasted of talk for a month. But this is an illusion. Frugal and restrained as he is in other departments of his life, in talk he is always in flood. Alert and keen, he is a monument of vitality. He speaks amazingly well, and is never by any chance at a loss for the means of expression. His talk is a mixture of sound knowledge and information, of sharp and piercing criticism, of lively gossip, of humour, good-nature, pantomime, and farce. His movements and gestures would equip a professional actor for life, and a series of pictures of him while talking would amply explain the purport of his speech. His very pose in his chair is that of a hound in leash, and from time to time he stands erect or advances menacingly to emphasize some point, already made as clear as sunlight by his remarkable powers of expression. He rattles off without an effort statistics relating to the fortunes of all the rich people of the country, mouthing his *cent mille francs* with evident gusto; he makes fun, with republican licence, of their foibles and

peculiarities; he imitates their gestures and renders them to the life. He wrings his fingers, as though they had been set on fire, to give an added point to some sufficiently remarkable statement, and punctuates his talk with phrases such as *crac*, which go off like explosives of admirable rhetorical device. He stands for the State as against the Church, for enlightenment as against ignorance, for freedom as against the vested interest. He quotes Victor Hugo with fiery eloquence in defence of his own profession: "Wherever in France there is a schoolmaster, *there* burns the torch, however small, of enlightenment; and wherever there is a *Curé*, *there* is a force that aims at extinguishing it."

He is opposed to the old processions of the Church, though he admits they made life picturesque in these little villages; but liberty and freedom are, he says, every man's right, and how can a man enjoy the sense of personal freedom if when reading his newspaper at ease in the sun, he is suddenly called upon to jump up and pull his hat off as the procession goes by? As to religion, his countrymen, he claims, are not wanting in the love of God; but of the Church and its impositions they have had enough.

The *Curé* of these days is no longer the well-educated, even the well-born, man he used to be. He is recruited from the humbler classes, from persons of small education, from amongst those who see no other vocation in life. If anyone has a futile son, what does he make of him? Why, a *Curé!* and with this he taps his forehead with a fine intellectual scorn.

Nevertheless, in speaking of the present *Curé*, who has been a failure at Castell' Nou and is leaving the village, he retains a sense of fairness, and does not exaggerate his faults.

This remarkable little man, with his energy, his active brain, and his keen indomitable mind, has lived here in this little village for the better part of his life, rejoicing in an income of £60 a year. He is invariably clean and neatly dressed, in a black suit, a white collar, and a black silk tie. When his day's work is done, he walks out a little way into the country accompanied by his wife and daughter, and is never to be seen in any other company, except when at school, in the little low-ceilinged room hung with maps and

the texts of a secular morality, he pours forth his energy upon the children seated before him. Once a year he takes a holiday to his native town of Toulouges, some ten miles away, and there meets his son—also a schoolmaster—and his son's wife, and basks, if such a man can be said to bask, in the glow of a family reunion. The speed at which he lives has turned his hair white at fifty-three; and the consuming fires of a restless mind will probably shorten the natural limit of his days. But there is no dimness in his bright eyes, no cloud upon his brain, keen and shining as a blade. He stands, all said, here in this little outpost of France, for the dignity of his people; a son of the Republic; and type of his race.

What, you will ask, is the attitude of this little village steeped in republicanism, and proud with the sentiment of the peasant proprietor, towards the château, which soars above it now as it did a thousand years ago? Its attitude is what one might expect from human nature and such an environment. The peasant knows that in theory all men are equal, that his lands are inviolate, that his person is unassailable. He has drunk deep, and once and for ever, of the strong red wine of freedom. Nothing will ever change him now in that respect. And yet, like the constellations, he is subject to the attraction of gravitation. The massive battlements, ever soaring above his head, influence his mind. The château remains in a sense the château. Those who live in it have some claim to honour, and the title of Vicomte comes naturally to his lips. Wealth is in any case a symbol to which he bows down every day of his life. Far back in his blood there is a traditional respect. Whence it comes that if "Monsieur le Vicomte" is a brave man, considerate, and willing to meet fellow-citizens of the Republic in the right way, and Madame la Vicomtesse has tact and nice manners, and is not too proud or haughty, the village is quite content that they shall live in peace and dignity up at the castle. Otherwise this little community of stubborn, unconquerable souls might become a very nest of hornets.

CHAPTER II

A CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEY TO ILLE

IN A MEDIÆVAL TOWN

One morning when the desire to be afoot came on me, I left my pleasant quarters at the château of Castell' Nou, and took the rough valley road to Ille. There was a certain fitness in the journey, for during those great centuries when the Viscounts were lords of the lands, and barons far and wide upon the countryside paid their homage at the castle, this was the road they took from Ille; while at Corbère by the wayside rose the tributary château of the Oms, whose minatory bulk still strikes the eye of the stranger as he enters the smiling Valley of the Tet. It is the first, and often it is the only, glimpse he gets of the feudal past of the Roussillon as his train bears him after his long night journey from Paris to his waters and his club at Vernet-les-Bains. But trains and strangers have left no mark upon the valley road from Castell' Nou to Ille. It remains a highway of the Middle Ages. Leaving the château under an old solitary tower built to command this thoroughfare, it drops to the sandy pebbled bed of the freshet of Castell' Nou, its character as a road being marked only by the deep ruts of the ox-waggons that occasionally pass this way. In each of these ruts there flows merrily along all that there is of the stream, though its wide bed indicates a more turbulent volume of water at flood seasons. It is a wild Spanish bit of road, dry and hard in its general character, yet endowed with unlooked-for beauties. Here are fields of scarlet poppies spread amidst the rugged olive groves, crimson patches of clover and purple of vetch, and white-tufted lupins, besides small

holdings of corn and vines. The wild-pomegranate, who still bears here the name she gave to Granada, grows with the sweetbriar and the oleander by the sands of the water-course, and numberless flowers with names unfamiliar to an English traveller blossom with the thyme and broom and gorse upon the stony hillsides.

How many a knight and man-at-arms must have passed along this very road, leaving his momentary impress on the yielding sands; for nine centuries have altered little here!

One emerges from these rude foot-hills on to the luxuriant plain of Ille, a land of Canaan, watered by rich canals, and laden with orchards and cornfields and gardens, bordered with avenues of cork and mulberry, and beautified with what is so rare in France, burgeoning oaks and trees untouched by the knife of the pruner.

From the edge of this fruitful plain rises the Château of Corbère, perched defiantly upon a precipitous rock, with its humble dependent village clustering about it for protection. But the village is now abandoned and in ruins, and only a few gipsies shelter within its walls, the former inhabitants having moved down to a lower and more convenient site. The castle still remains in the possession of an ancient family of the soil, but they have abdicated their proud position. They prefer to live in the comfortable plain, to gather in their vintages, and to find their solace for departed glories in the materialism which lies like a blight upon this ancient realm. We think that we are materially-minded in England, but the French are far ahead of us on that road, and there is a strain of bitterness in the French attitude which we lack—as though a man should say with a shrug of his shoulders, "Well, since I may not be a gentleman, I will turn Shylock and build up my banking account."

There is a very steep driving-road up to the castle, which runs through a wood of cork and oak trees, and is very beautiful at this season with masses of golden broom. There is a grove of stone-pines under its high walls, which clearly show in their bending forms the influence of the mistral. But no one troubled much about the mistral nine hundred years ago; and the Romans, who were here before these Gothic lords and barons, and admired force fully as much as

CASTILIAN SERGEANT AT PERTHUS (*page* 190)

BANYULS-SUR-MER (*page* 198)

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they did, even built a statue to the great Wind at Narbonne. The view from the château is superb, extending far over the red roofs of its village to the blue-green plain of the Tet, to the Corbières which bound it on the farther side, and to the sea beyond Perpignan and Elne.

In the courtyard of the château there is a marble well-head with ancient Gothic letters which tell that it was made for a Lord of Oms; and the whole space about it, and below the paved court, is the cistern upon which the life of the château depended. One wing of the court is modern; but a solid archway near the well-head leads into a vaulted chamber lighted by a single embrasured window, which dates from the earliest days of the château. Below this, again, and in the very bowels of the rock, there is a dark and silent room, to which there is no access but by a ladder descending through a trapdoor, and no light but that which is permitted to enter through its roof from the window above. Prison, or oubliette, or granary, it is haunted by the very spirit of the Middle Ages. Stairs from the open court by the well-head lead up to the residential part of the château, which consists of a labyrinth of irregularly-shaped rooms, with small windows opening on the beautiful world outside. The remarkable feature of this castle is its *solid* tower of granite, which centuries of sunlight have turned to a warm yellow hue. There are mighty stone "cannon-balls" imbedded in its face; one, according to the story, for each victory won by the lords of the castle. No guns of a calibre adequate to throw such balls can have been in use here in those bygone days in the Roussillon, and they must have been reserved to throw down upon the heads of an enemy at the moment of assault; or perhaps they were thrown by the catapults that preceded guns. Whether this mighty tower was always solid, or whether its dark interior was filled up for reasons of which there is no record, one cannot say. It stands the very embodiment of a rude people and of a rude age.

There is an old chapel outside the fortress, unfrequented now since the village was abandoned. Its carved altars are rotting into touchwood, its walls are damp with the rain that enters through the decaying roof. Over the high-altar

there still hangs a Spanish figure of the Christ, carved with a sombre and tragic realism, by some man into whose spirit there had entered the full horror of the Crucifixion. A wooden Catherine wheel with bells dates to the same remote period. There is a damp dark oratory in the château itself.

The whole place is Spanish, Oriental, forlorn, and neglected; and, as though to remind one that the days of its lords are over and gone, there stands in the centre of the great hall, in all its pristine elegance, a sedan-chair, green and gold and emblazoned with arms, and lined inside with a delicate silk. The poles with which it was carried stand unused against the whitewashed walls. The massive timber of the hall has been daubed with lime, and a cheap linoleum covers the floor upon which steel clanked and men-at-arms assembled. One can see well enough that the brave days are gone.

Descending from the Château of Corbère, we drove along the rich plain, frequently meeting the swift canal of Thuir, through avenues of shady trees and a land flowing with milk and honey, into the prosperous town of Ille.

Here we put up at the Hôtel du Midi, the mule being lodged in an enormous stable, with heavy cobwebbed beams and a dusk interior, the very home of repose and tranquillity, with room in it for fifty beasts and a host of carts and waggons of the greatest size. It had the true Spanish air of antiquity and space. Here was no garage or Swiss hotel. The innkeeper appeared at his door in a white cap and apron (sure sign of efficiency), and soon set before me an admirably cooked meal, consisting of a very perfect truffled omelette, a pigeon with young green peas, a beefsteak *aux pommes* (the latter were golden and crisp), and some fresh cream cheese of the kind one eats in France with sifted sugar. There was fruit and wine upon the table, and the maid poured out a glass of *rancio* as a proper conclusion. Two and a half francs was the price of this entertainment. My neighbour was a heavy Catalan squireen from Vinça, a jovial soul who made very broad sallies for the edification of a country lady and her maid, who were seated at a separate table and heartily entered into his rude humour. I asked him if he knew them, and he said: "Oh no; but

we are a very free and easy people round here. There are parts of France now where a man has to hold his tongue; but we are less reserved here, we Catalans; and the women don't mind—bless their hearts! it amuses them"; with which he swaggered off with a bold and satisfied air, as of one who had fared well and sustained his reputation.

After lunch I took the buck-board and the mule and went off with Joseph, the only man in the Pyrénées-Orientales who can make this mule travel, on a visit to the Château of Caladroër, high up on the Corbières across the valley. We crossed the Tet by a fine and lofty bridge of many arches, the river swirling splendidly below under the old grey ramparts and the massive church of Ille. The town from this view-point presents a striking sight, with the purple foothills beyond, and the vast bulk of the Canigou rising up into the clouds in a pyramid of snow. We began to ascend the alluvial outworks of the Corbières known as Les Orgues, which have been wrought into the most fantastic and astonishing forms by the action of weather upon their soft friable surface. We found ourselves in the midst of a sort of cathedral of pinnacles and buttresses of the most bizarre and monumental type. Immense sections had been cut deep into these hills, exposing their stratification in the most legible manner. We could see at a glance the alternating layers of sand and boulders of which their mass is composed; and the action of water in building them up, as it is now destroying them, was plainly visible. Les Orgues they are called, not only from their peculiar conformation, but from the strange music that wails through them when the mistral is abroad. Their soft friable character is in extreme contrast with the savage and iron-bound Corbières, which rise above them, thousands of years older in time, in masses of grey unyielding rock. Through this wild untenanted country the white road takes its way, and for a mile or two there is no sign of any life or habitation. Down in the hollow of the shattered winding gorge we could see a small stream making its brisk way, forming at intervals a pool, in whose clear shallows the trout lay visible a hundred feet below.

Continuing, we arrived at the village of Belesta-de-la-

Frontière, and were once more in a land which though strange and primitive, was full of vineyards and an assiduous cultivation. It is the borderland of the Roussillon, as its name indicates; and it was here in bygone times that the territory of Fenouilledes of the Narbonnais began. The village is strung in a line on the slope of an isolated hill, and the white highroad passes through it under its mighty cyclopean walls. Through a beautiful pointed gateway, still brave with the symbols of war, we had a momentary glimpse up the long grey ancient street, with its houses very close together, while above them rose the high belfry of the village church. By the roadside also, we passed wells with pointed domes built over them, in shape like the steel helmets of the Crusaders, and very old and primitive in their character. There is no wilder country than this rough upland that lies between the Agly and the Tet, and one has only to go to some old place like Belesta, or, still better, to Montalba near by, where an old feudal château survives in the heart of a fortified village that might have been built by the Cyclops, to realize how faint an impress the twentieth century has made upon this countryside.

At Caladroër it is otherwise, for wealth has transmogrified its old feudal tower of the tenth century into a flashing stucco villa, with white walls and light blue windows that cynically jostle the weathered granite, and rise unashamed beside colossal fragments of rock that look like the very ribs of the old earth exposed to a vulgar gaze. The château, therefore, is not worth coming all this way to see, but the view that spreads from it over the serried vines of a great estate to the vast plain of the Roussillon — a wonderful symphony in grey, green, and purple, with shining towns and sombre church-towers—is of the most embracing and beautiful description. One looks across to the heights above Port Vendres to the towers of Madaloch and Massane, the level lands of Thuir under the rugged foot-hills of the Aspres, the châteaux of Castell' Nou and Corbière, which stand boldly up like champions of the lost cause of the Middle Ages, and up, and up, and up, till one's eye meets at last, as it always does in this country, the compelling glory of the Canigou.

In the near foreground, where the vines spread in billows and mighty squares, winds the white ribbon of road which connects across the rude Corbières the twin valleys of the Agly and the Tet; while above it, towering up against the eastern skyline, is the fortress hermitage of Forca-Real, famed in the wars of Majorca and Aragon. Behind the château there are deep woods from which comes the music of crooning doves and innumerable nightingales.

Returning, we were caught in a storm of rain, and the landscape, including the mountain villages of Caramany and Belesta (Bello Stare they called it in the ancient days), was wrapped in grey lifting mists that might have come across here from the county Wicklow. Slop, slop, slop, we bore down the streaming road, through hail and rain and blinding showers that came and went, till at seven o'clock in the evening we were back once more in the comfortable town of Ille, and the tired mule entered the soft gloom of the mighty stable at the Midi, with bent head and drooping tail, very glad, no doubt, to get back, but taciturn and silent after the manner of his kind.

My room in the Hôtel du Midi had two windows—a large one opening on the street, and a long and narrow one like an archer's slit opening on the Canigou, so that I could see it without moving from my bed. Hence, when my eyes opened at five o'clock next morning, they were dazzled with the yellow sunlight on the very summit of the great mountain. Its snows had already caught the effulgence of the dawn, and were shining with a magic lustre against the blue sky, while the night still lay upon all that was of a lesser elevation. Step by step the darkness withdrew itself, like a veil that was being slowly removed to display the mountain's exquisite beauty, and the day broke widely over the green foot-hills and the smiling plain. How shall one convey the exalted, the shining, beauty of this wonderful mountain, which changes with each hour of each day, and displays itself with an inexhaustible variety at every vantage-point in the Roussillon? It is surely the King of this land, and it should put the people in love with the idea of a monarchy.

Before leaving Ille I gave some attention to the town. It is

a place of three thousand inhabitants, linked with history, full of memories of ancient days, and perhaps the most favoured of all towns in this fruitful land by reason of its rich orchards and gardens and running water. It consists, like so many other towns in this country, of an old Spanish quarter still clearly defined by ancient walls, about which a French faubourg has grown up since the Revolution. The former holds memories of stormy days, when Ille, now buried in rustic peace, was a border town. "*Au-delà de la Tet, qui baignait ses fortifications, c'était la France, et, par conséquent, l'Ennemi.*" But so well have the old and the new mingled, that a stranger passing down the Route Nationale which bisects the town, would never suspect that he was actually under the old fortified walls. The wide highway, the line of cafés and shops, the glass front of the *pharmacien* and the swinging brass of the *coiffeur*, look commonplace enough; but let him step aside under a fine stone arch which frames the long inner vista of houses and balconies on both sides of its narrow street, and he will find himself at once in line, to right and left, with the embattled ramparts, which the thrifty citizens have converted into the back walls and inner chambers of their shops and houses. A narrow street, with scarcely a door or window opening on it, runs unchanged along the inner face of the ramparts into the Place de Jeu de Paume, which was the scene of Mérimée's "Venus of Ille." Here it was that Monsieur Alphonse, pale, but calm and resolute, upheld the honour of Ille against the dark Aragonese on that fateful day of his marriage, while the assembled crowd threw their caps into the air, and shook each other by the hand, to the mortification of the Spanish muleteers. But the old game is no longer played in Ille, and the Place de Jeu de Paume lies deserted and empty. It has the ramparts on one side, with their wide and massive masonry, and at the end, whence a narrow street leads away to the church, a magnificent bending plane-tree which brightens the gloomy alleys with its living green. The sombre thoroughfares; the closely-shut houses, yielding, when their doors open, glimpses of vast inner *patios;* the mules being laden with baggage; the voices of the muleteers; an indefinable air of neglect and indifference—all these suggest a small

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Spanish town. Many of the big silent houses have stately inner rooms, and carved marble doorways, and the impress of the bygone days, when the Spanish nobility had town-houses in Ille. The history of these ancient families, which have died out or become merged in the people, or still protract a haughty but subdued existence under the heel of their republican neighbours, is closely interwoven with the history of the land. One may read in volumes of local genealogy how one Galcerand II. of Urg, Lord of Ille, fought at the great battle of Navas de Tolosa against the Moors; how Ava de Fenollet, a daughter of the Viscount of Fenollet and Ille, married the great Jazbert, Viscount of Castell' Nou, and passed the evening of her life as a widow in Ille, cherishing the sick and the poor; how the noble house of Ille was concerned in the wars of Aragon and Majorca, and grew in power, till it passed on the distaff side to the De Pinos and De Castros, Viscounts of Canet and Evol, and was expatriated for a season when Louis XI. of France became master of the Roussillon; how the Monçades, Counts of Ossuna, and the Dukes of Medina-Cœli, who were grandees of Spain, continued as Lords of Ille even when it passed for ever into French hands under the Treaty of the Pyrenees; and how they are still represented by descendants who live in these dark old houses that look so forbidding from the street. M. Sire de Vilar, who owns by descent the ancient Château of Corbère, and was good enough to drive with me to his old castle of Spain and show me over its interior, still has his town-house in Ille, in the ancient home of the Descatllar, to which he comes every Sunday in summer to attend Mass in the adjoining church. For the old families still hold by the Catholic faith.

The church of Ille stands grey and massive, a survival from other days. It was thirty-six years in the building, and has a magnificent granite façade, a lofty and solid tower, and a vast single nave with small chapels on either side. If you enter of a Sunday morning you will find the high tapers gleaming on the gilded altar, the priest in his rich embroideries and stole, moving solemnly through the august ceremony of the Mass, turning the sacred pages upon which the light is concentrated. And in the nave you will see

upon their knees, in black and sombre garments, the faithful of Ille. But in the vestibule you will find the gamins of the streets engaged in leap-frog and enjoying themselves with great hilarity; while through their midst the worshippers pass into the solemn interior, taking no heed of their indecorous behaviour: for this is of the Catholic East.

The church with its strong tower and mighty buttresses, stands immediately above the river wall of Ille, and one passes from it by a postern gate straight out into the rich

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orchards and gardens which flourish here by the river's edge. A few yards away is the white road over the hills to Belesta of the frontier, and the long sunlit bridge over the river.

There are old and narrow and mediæval streets in this part of the town, which, if stones could speak, would have much to say. Here is the lovers' street, the Rue des Enamourats, with its symbol of two passionate persons kissing each other; the Rue de Malpas, with its sinister name and its queer figure over an angle of the wall; the Rue de la Parayre, which recalls the cloth-weaving days of the Roussillon, when its bales travelled as far as Rhodes and

Cyprus, and to the markets of the East. Many a solemn procession of Church or State has passed down these narrow and tortuous thoroughfares; many a man has lain dead in them with a wound in his side; many things have happened since Peter of Aragon wrote in July, 1343, "We are now engaged in the siege of Ille, in which our enemies are shut up"; many since the Huguenots suddenly fell upon the town in May of the year 1596, and fought a bloody battle in the streets with the outraged citizens. Malodorous and dirty they are, it is true, and you need a good nose to get comfortably through a morning in Ille; but its human interest is undeniable.

The Place de la République is more imposing, with its white marble statue of the Reaper with her sickle and the sheaves of corn lying at her feet. Here there is space and sunlight and shelter under the trees, and on summer evenings the young men and the handsome daughters of Ille dance to the sound of the flute and the hautboy, and make merry after the manner of the Catalans.

BOOK V

VALLESPIR AND THE MARGIN OF THE SEA

CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE CANTARANA TO AMÉLIE

AMÉLIE-LES-BAINS lies in the Valley of the Tech, and the proper road to it is up the valley of that river, a road that is very beautiful in early summer with avenues of yellow broom that flame like the Burning Bush. But one may reach it from Perpignan, or for that matter, from any of the towns in the lower valley of the Tet, by crossing the rugged foot-hills which keep these rivers apart, and are locally known as the Aspres. It is a wild rough country, whose existence one would never suspect while travelling across the vine-embroidered plain.

It was upon an afternoon in May, when Perpignan was sultry with the advancing glow of summer, that I took advantage of an invitation from my friend Commandant A—— to motor across to Amélie by this way. Once we began to move, the air was delicious, and travelling became a pleasure. We took the Thuir road, but presently branched off across the shining plain to Canohes and Ponteilla. At Trouillas we crossed the Cantarana, which runs its short course with the Reart to the lagoon of St. Nazaire, watering the orchards and the vineland of the plain, and helping to fill the salt lagoon with fruitful earth.

Across the Cantarana we found ourselves in the foot-hills of the Aspres, and the whole landscape changed as if by magic from a plain that seemed endless and monotonous almost, with its far-spreading vines, to a billowy land of cork-woods, whose sombre foliage and twisted boughs and dark chocolate-hued trunks made a still mystery about us, and gave us

a sense as of an enchanted woodland. Here the instinct of the peasantry has placed the site of the forgotten city of Mirmande, the home of the mountain fays, in which these enchantresses lived in beautiful halls in the days when Arthur was King. Mirmande, they will tell you, was a great city when Barcelona was yet unborn.

This is the land of the Cantarana and the Reart, of wild rocky gorges and streams that swell with sudden fury, the haunt of the wild boar and of invisible people—a survival, as it were, of some old world out of which the shining mass of the Canigou rose, with its new message of clarity and benediction to the people at its foot. We passed swiftly through it, racing through its scattered hamlets—Torderes and Llauro, and Oms which gave its name to the great family of the land—its acres of gorse and broom, its sombre woods; and when we came out at the Hermitage of St. Ferreol, shining on its hill, with the wide vale of the Tech spread out at our feet, under the formidable heights of the Albères, crowned with forts and towers, it was with the feeling that we had emerged from another land and another age. We passed but two men on the white road that winds, as if it might wind for ever, through the sombre cork-woods; and both of them were itinerant *jongleurs*, with their fiddles and bagpipes wrapped in green cloth, proceeding to a fête at Ceret; and even these men were alone and a mile apart.

At Ceret we stayed to pay our homage to its stately and beautiful bridge, which spans the Tech and has stood here for 1,500 years. It reaches across the water in a single arch, and its age and its grandeur have so impressed the popular imagination that people say it was only when the devil came to the help of the distracted architect, at the price of his soul, that it was completed.

The little river flows far below it, green and tranquil, and giving no hint of its greater life, when it rises full of wrath and tries to break the yoke imposed upon it by man. From under its superb arch, which is as light and graceful as a rainbow, one sees the snowy mass of the Canigou, dazzling white against the blue empyrean, or transfigured in a golden haze of sunlight, according to its mood.

Close by the water's edge, and strangely near its passionate

heart, is an old mill now used as a factory for pipes, and inhabited by people who look as if they had been left here forgotten by the Middle Ages. In the front room, with its wide door opening on the street, are two women, hatchet in hand, toiling away at a vast pile of wood knots of fantastic shapes which fill the house from floor to roof. And such women ! strong and persistent and taciturn, silently fulfilling their laborious lives.

Through the soft gloom in which they toil one enters the factory, where six men, white with sawdust, sit, equally silent, equally strenuous, in the very midst of whirling bands and swiftly-revolving circles of steel, converting the gnarled masses of wood into the first rudimentary outlines of the pipes that are to be. There is something fearful in their environment of pitiless force and cutting steel. A little slip of the pushing hand, and the red blood would gush out and stain the yellow dust ; and if one of these silent workmen were to fall forward in a faint, or by some other mischance, the saw would drive through his brain with a cold precision.

It is strange, as one goes speeding across the world in a swift car, passing from the plainland into the mountains, from valley to valley, from one city to another, to come suddenly upon such toilers as these, intent upon their glittering wheels of steel, living out their lives in this place of soft lights and shadows, hard by the great bridge and the never-resting always changing river. Of what is Man not capable ?

There is a cork factory next door, where women turn off the corks by the thousand, a pursuit that is almost as fascinating if less primitive ; and a stone-breaker's house, in which a whole family toil, the father with his great hammer at the foot of a vast pile of stones, upon which his children are perched with little hammers, also at work, while their mother toils beside her husband.

Leaving Ceret and its remnants of ancient walls and towers, its boulevard under the plane-trees, where once there moved the waters of its moat, we ran along the valley road under avenues of Spanish chestnuts, and passing under Palalda on its hill, crowned with old mediæval towers, we brought our journey to an end under the roses and plane-trees of Amélie.

The town, which was so named in 1840 after Queen Amélie, lies along the waters of the Mondony, which here flow to their junction with the Tech, through a gorge of magnificent depth, cut as though with a great sword into the towering mountains. Here is a place of profound contrasts, of velvet shadows and shining lights; and the view, which begins with rocks hurled about as if by a maddened giant, climbs afar off to a smiling little field of corn, across which the light breezes ripple in languorous beauty.

The waters come tumbling over a straight wall, making a screen of silvery light, and pass on in deep tranquil pools under the rose-gardens and the dreaming cypresses to their junction with the Tech. This is the part of the river which is known as the Cascade d'Annibal, in memory of the great conqueror. It is a spot that no human ingenuity can deprive of its natural beauty; and, in point of fact, the buildings of the Thermes Pujades, rising tier upon tier in the forefront of the gorge, are of an architecture that harmonizes well with its surroundings.

Amélie shares with Vernet the distinction of being one of the most important watering-places of the Eastern Pyrenees; its waters are not less efficacious, and its climate is as fine, and even a little warmer in winter. But it lacks the amenities of life at Vernet; it has no first-rate hotels, none of the comfort and luxury of its rival, and it is overshadowed by the Military Hospital, one of the largest of its kind in France. It is essentially a French, or perhaps one should say a Catalan, resort; and life can be lived there in very economical fashion by quiet people.

Along the upper waters of the Tech which flow past it, lie several engaging and attractive townlets and villages. There is Arles, with its old Benedictine abbey and its cloisters, and its miraculous water that flows from an old tomb by the grace of the saints Abdon and Sennen, curing people every year of the most terrible ills. There is Coustouges up a side-valley, with its old romanesque church and beautiful arch; there is Serralonga, the birthplace of the poet Pierre Talrich, who has left some verses about Vallespir and his native land which are of a haunting beauty. He wished, after an absence of sixty years, to come back to

the peace and quiet of his little valley, but died before the fulfillment of his desire. There is Prats de Mollo, a little fortified town on the Spanish border, which holds memories of deeds of arms, and bygone Kings of Majorca, and still earlier Counts of Besalu. There is La Preste, with its meadows and its mineral waters, and its fine mountain air, which tempts many Catalan visitors from the plain in mid-summer. And there are ruins, all the way up the valley, of old feudal châteaux with historic names, to remind one of the past history of the land. Nowhere are old Catalan customs better preserved than in this secluded corner of the Pyrenees. The national costume is still worn, and the Catalan dances survive in their old forms.

Returning from Amélie to Perpignan by the lower road, which avoids the rough country of the Aspres, we stayed a half-hour at the new château of Monsieur and Madame Bardou, whose Catalan frankness and simplicity of manner reconcile one to the splendour of their home, while the view from this white-colonnaded house, with its terraces covered with luxuriant roses, is of the greatest beauty, reaching east and west up the long valley, from the blue Mediterranean to the white splendour of the Canigou. Facing south, it fronts the Albères, cut into daring diagonals by great cannon roads which climb to the heights of St. Christophe; the fort of Bellegarde, looking defiantly over into Spain; and the thrice-famous Col de Perthus. Here is but one of a hundred vantage-points in this land of vistas, so lavish in its prospects of surpassing interest and beauty.

Our road now lay across the Roussillon plain, past Monastir del Camp and the Mas Deu, where the Templars in bygone days had their chief stronghold in the Eastern Pyrenees, and where their doom was sealed in the year 1307. The land we traversed is full of historic interest, and the memory of the battles fought here 118 years ago, when the French Republic was still young and fiercely assailed by its neighbours, is fresh in all the *métairies* and villages of the plain. Monsieur La Mer who drove us in his car, had much to say of these historic events, for his grandfather was one of those who fought here upon several memorable occasions.

As the sun was setting over the vine-clad plain, gilding the

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million vines and the snowy crests of the Canigou, we ran into the crowded streets of Perpignan, into the stress and murmur of the city, and our journey was at an end.

CHAPTER II

THE PORT OF VENUS

PORT VENDRES

It was a May morning, the sixth of that blessed month, and the train, as it ran through the beautiful and historic country from Perpignan, past vineyards and orchards and market-gardens, stayed for a moment under the walls of Elne, which, in spite of all its vicissitudes, still rises nobly above the plain. It is of the grey lucent tint which is so well rendered in Perrault's fine picture of Hannibal confronting the Gauls at Ruscino.

Presently we crossed the Tech, leaving at Elne the railroad which traverses the valley to Amélie and Arles-sur-Tech, a very tempting road. We now approached the Albères and the sea, and at Port Vendres I alighted from the train. I walked down to the quay and the little blue harbour which lay framed amidst the brown-green hills and commanding forts. Out beyond the port, the Mediterranean, under the lash of the mistral, was crested with white foam, and the fishing fleet of Collioure was out at sea, its white sails catching the sun. The port was like a blue mirror, and by the quay there was a gigantic sailing-ship, whose masts rose higher than the lofty houses, and whose cordage made a pattern across the entire landscape. Fronting the sea there is a large square with some trees and grass, that would be sordid and unkempt were it not for a beautiful bronze of

a fisher-lad and his sweetheart, which, as in so many Latin towns, charms the spectator away by its magic, from the abounding materialism of life to its ideal possibilities. The girl stands fearlessly looking towards the sea, erect and beautiful, with the simple candour of youth upon her face; while the lad, with one solicitous arm about her waist, bends his head over to kiss her fingers. Here is something in this little seafaring town that tells of a lad's tender and adoring love; of youth, with its high courage and exquisite sensibility. One never sees such things in an English town. There indeed we should keep up the square with great regard for soft velvet turf and ordered flower-beds; but the ideal note, the creative impulse of art, would be lacking. Nor would anyone ever dream in England of asking for such a thing.

Down at the quay there are all the familiar and wonted sights of a little seaport town, very welcome after a prolonged sojourn in a mountain valley away from the great highway. Here the cranes rattle, the boatswain whistles, and the crew unload their cargo. At the cafés, under the awnings, new types of the seafaring man are to be seen: the ship-of-war comes here; the liners that ply between France and Algiers; the dark collier from Newcastle; the timber-ship from Norway; and anon a white yacht with her gleaming brass and fluttering pennant.

To Port Vendres there came the Massilian Greek of twenty-five centuries ago, and to the Roman world this little secluded harbour was known as the Port of the Pyrenean Venus. Her temple rose upon the sea's edge at the mouth of the harbour, and the entering mariner paid here his homage to the Goddess of Love. Eclipsed throughout the Middle Ages by the greater fame, and strength as a place of arms, of its neighbour Collioure, Port Vendres remained almost unknown, till the keen eye of Vauban searching for defences against Spain, saw in it vast possibilities as a military port. He threw up at once a number of the forts that protect it to this day, and wrote indignantly of the blindness of those who, though serving the King, had passed it by, yet it was not till the last years of Louis XVI. that his projects were to some extent realized by the Marshal de Mailley, whose monument, shorn of its beauty by the

revolutionary mob, still stands in the centre of the little town. The blue waters of its harbour are deep enough to float the largest man-of-war, and tranquil as a pool in the stormiest weather.

At the Hôtel du Commerce at Port Vendres one is in the midst of its attractive life. Upstairs sit the officers from the forts, and the ship-captains with their pointed beards and fresh wholesome air; while below, where the café awnings meet the white cobbled quay, the people go up and down in the narrow space between it and the big sailing-ships. Here of a summer evening, with the moon gleaming overhead, one may see as much beauty as any man has a right to look for in a little town of less than three thousand souls, and come to know the faces of almost every one of its inhabitants. In this wonderful sea-town there is neither coal-dust nor squalor. The quay is as white and clean as the parlour of a Dutch inn, the air is clear, and the sky very blue and powdered with stars, when the moon will allow any rivalry. At the far end of the harbour, where it opens out to sea, is the fortress lighthouse pulsing with increasing and lessening flame. On all sides rise the Pyrenees in low, swelling, fort-covered hills, with the sea washing their foundations; or in sharp, pyramidal peaks cut like cameos against the luminous sky.

The Port of Venus! it is a perfect and apposite name. It is a very haunt of security and joy; and there is a magic in its soft air, in its blue waters, its brown and barren-looking hills, and in the white moonlight which floods it all, which no words can reproduce. If Venus herself came up on such a night as this, out of the rim of the blue Mediterranean, one would scarcely be surprised.

CHAPTER III

COLLIOURE

LOOKING DOWN ON COLLIOURE

The road to Collioure after skirting the edge of Port Vendres, turns inland up a little branching harbour, and making its way past the obelisk of the Marshal de Mailley through a deep cut in the hills, winds along the rough coast, like a road in Brittany or in Ireland, past rock-bound little bays where the dark blue water breaks in foam at the foot of the black cliffs, past small farms, and fields of corn, and vineyards, till it descends into Collioure. Upon this road I met the country people driving their market-carts; gendarmes with the hard, determined air of the Guardia Civile; soldiers from the forts; and down at the edge of the cornfields below the road I saw some small birds plunging wildly under a net, and a man come up and take them one by one and enclose them in a bag. Two, by dint of fortune or of unusual effort, escaped. The man was in no hurry, and did not think it worth his while to run up the last yard or two, just as the birds were escaping. He seemed hardened to his trade, and pocketing the birds with a swift movement, rapidly rolled up his net and went his way. The mistral was blowing fiercely, and seemed to put out hands to push me back, so that I was glad to reach the shelter of Collioure.

Collioure is the Volendam of the South—one of those picturesque spots that is unlike any other upon earth. So near to Port Vendres, it is yet another world. The Middle Ages still brood over it, and its people are a race apart. For the great sailing-ship, the thundering man-of-war, the

sumptuous yacht of the millionaire, there is no place at Collioure. It is the haunt of its fishing folk alone. Its curving shore is lined with their sailing craft, whose masts make a serried line above the shingle, like the lances in Velasquez's picture, and black nets put out to dry are a feature of its landscape. Here is the Catalan, unchanged since the days of Muntaner and Roger de Flor, a seafaring man with a hard determined outlook of his own. One may still see here the red Phrygian cap of the Catalans, which French influence has all but driven out of the Roussillon.

But what changes Collioure has seen! What episodes of war and ceremony and stately observance, in the days gone by, when it was the great maritime outlet of the Catalans this side of the Pyrenees! Its name enshrines the memory of those dark Iberians who first founded it as the seaport of their town of Elne; Greek and Iberian and Roman coins found in its soil attest its high antiquity; and the records of the Middle Ages are crowded with events in its career—with the tale of its battles and sieges, and of the Knights Templars, who held it in fief, and built their proud castle here beside its waters, and of the Princes, and Queens, and Emperors, and Popes, who entered its harbour from Spain and Italy and France. From the little fishing-port, so picturesque and forgotten, sailed for the conquest of Majorca the chivalry of Roussillon; the Infante Dom Ferdinand, on his way to Sicily and Greece; the Viscount Jazbert of Castell' Nou, on his way to Ceuta of Granada. Here the King Sancho of Majorca received, and married with stately ceremonial, his bride, the daughter of the King of Sicily. Here came King Ferdinand of Castile to meet at Perpignan the Emperor Sigismond and the Anti-pope Benoit, in a fruitless effort to heal the distracting schism of the Church.

Here in the fifteenth century, when the Catalans were active in trade, lived the Consuls of Venice and Florence and Genoa and the Lombardy States; and in the records of this little town one may read how, when it was owned by Yolande de Bar, Queen of Aragon, she permitted its citizens to receive pirates and corsairs and to traffic with

them, whoever they might be, so that they had not preyed upon the trade of her own people. Thus was Collioure even a pirate port.

The most magnificent object in it to-day is the old castle of the Knights Templars, which rises up sheer from the sea's edge to a great height. The modifications of Vauban and successive military engineers, all conceived in the most brutally matter-of-fact spirit, have swept away nearly every trace of the Templars; but the great south wall retains its mediæval air, and the view from its summit is very beautiful. One hundred and thirty feet below one, in a line as straight as a plummet, is the causeway, with the clear green water breaking and heaving with a gentle undulation along it, though in rough weather it dashes up as high as forty feet and floods the lower bastion. From here, looking down so far below, one can see the people pass—the hardy fishing-men, and many a beautiful Catalan girl with swaying figure full of life and animation. Even from so great a height one can see this. One can see, also, the line of the old battlemented walls of Collioure, and the church with its granite cupola, and its rocky foundations laid in the water. From all the surrounding heights rise great dominant forts, menacing and formidable to look upon, yet all of them now *déclassé* and things that have had their day.

One's roaming eye returns to the grey wall of the Templars, and to traces of an old door that opened from it on stairs that reached to the water's edge where the incoming ships anchored. And one can picture a royal galley coming in with a Queen of Aragon on board flying the red and yellow flag of Spain, rich tapestries and carpets laid upon the stairs for her to walk upon, the château door flung open, and men-at-arms and all the fishing folk crowding about the ship.

From here one can see the twin harbours of which Collioure is composed, the ports of the Valley and the Mountain, in the latter of which the life of Collioure centres. Here, as the summer evening closed in, I found hundreds of fishermen reclining on the curving shore, their boats and nets about them, while in the church all the girls, and many of the women, were assembled for an evening service in honour of

the Virgin whose month this is. It was, as ever, a moving sight, and the women all joined in the singing of the choir. Before them, in the golden taper-lit gloom of the interior, rose the high-altar, reaching from the pavement to the roof of the church. Its carved wood, gilded with a Spanish luxuriance, bears tribute to the genius of the sculptor Sunyer, who made it 227 years ago. Many of its details are beautiful, and some of the bas-reliefs are worthy of close observation. The side-chapels are almost as sumptuously arrayed as the high-altar, and in one of these there is the historic statue of St. Vincent of Collioure, which till 1902, when the French Government intervened, was carried in procession through the town on the 16th of August each year. It was a striking and picturesque ceremony, one of the most singular and remarkable in the Roussillon, and a genuine survival from the Middle Ages.

The custom was to carry the relics of the saint from the church where they lie, to the little chapel of St. Vincent on its lonely sea-fronting rock, and thence at nightfall embark them on a boat for Collioure. One may picture the Southern night, the unruffled sea aglow with the lights of the fishing-boats in line, the great bonfires, the people on the shore, and the sombre heights of the castle impending over all. As the leading boat, with its sacred burden and thronging priests, apparelled in the rich vestments of the Church, touched the beach, it was the custom for the Captain of the Port to advance and stay for a moment the disembarkation, with the following dialogue:

"What barque is this?"

"This is the barque of St. Vincent."

"Whence cometh this barque?"

"She cometh from St. Vincent of the Isle."

"What burden doth she carry?"

"She carries the sacred relics of St. Vincent, St. Maxime, and St. Liberate."

"Hath she any passengers, and is all in order?"

"Yes, she hath passengers, and all is in order."

"What is your purpose?"

"We seek fair entry into Collioure."

"Enter, then, in the name of God."

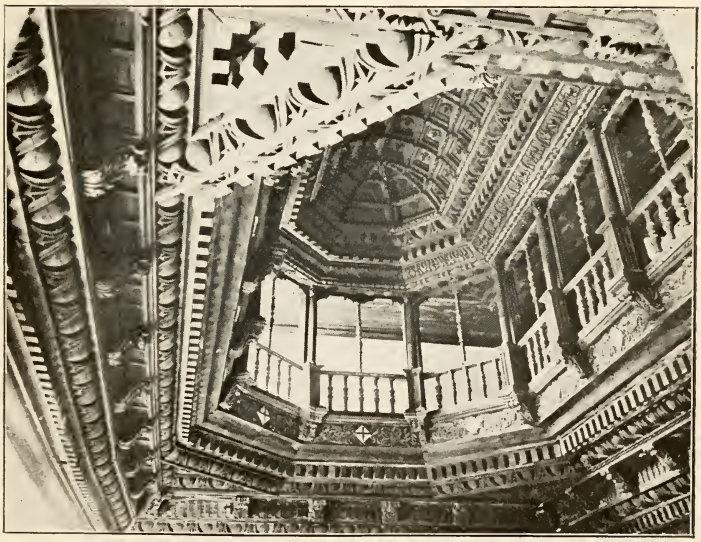
Whereupon, with loud acclamation, the assembled people

called out the name of "St. Vincent! St. Vincent!" and, seizing the long hawsers affixed to the barque, bore her at great speed across the shore and into the heart of the town, where stands the Virgin of the Crossways. Thence once more the sacred relics were carried back to their resting-place in the church, while the people threw themselves into the enjoyment of the summer night; the *jongleurs* played their fiddles, and man and maid danced under the shining stars.

This old-world ceremony has gone, like so much else that was good and worth preserving in France, because of the want of harmony amongst her people. She is a land rent in twain by domestic strife and discord; and even here, in this old-world fishing-town, there is the constant jar of faction, of the clerical and the anti-clerical; of those who have been to extremes in one direction, and of those who are angrily bent on going to extremes in the other. Wherever the right may lie, this means in the aggregate, loss of vitality to France, and we who love her wish for her strength and life.

I walked back in the silver light of the moon, over the rough promontories to Port Vendres. The road lay white and solitary, not a soul upon it. The small farmhouses were shut up and already dark; but behind me gleamed the lights of Collioure, and at my feet lay the sea, curling in white indolent foam about the cliffs. It is a beautiful road, worth following on such a night. At Port Vendres my room looked straight out upon the intricate beauty of masts and cordage, and the moonlight flung their trembling shadows across the floor. From another window I could see the Tour de Madaloch, whose very name for many is reminiscent of Ashtaroth and Baal, standing clear and dark against the sky, a survival from far-distant times.

A BACK YARD IN BARCELONA (*page* 212)



ROOF OF THE OLD PALACE OF THE VICEROYS, BARCELONA (*page* 214)

CHAPTER IV

THE TOWER OF MADALOCH

TOWER OF MADALOCH

One wonderful day, at eight in the morning, the sun beating warm on Port Vendres, we left in a carriage for the Tour de Madaloch. Down by the unruffled blue of the harbour there was no wind, but immediately above it a wild mistral was blowing, which at the Fort of St. Elme attained the force of a violent gale. This old fort of the great Emperor Charles V. stands magnificently upon the naked rock, exposed to all the winds of heaven, and commanding upon all sides views of the greatest beauty. It has an outer sloping glacis and a deep moat, both now covered with grass and flowers. In the centre is the living rock, upon which the fort stands up, wider at its base than at its summit, with inward sloping walls and battlements and corner turrets. It has a donjon, or keep, in the form of a round tower. The walls rise up massive and inviolate, without doors or windows, and the only access to this eyrie is on its northern side, where it looks over Collioure, by means of a drawbridge and a great embattled door. Built in the restless days of the Emperor, this old fortress, under which the railway tunnel has been driven, retains its air of grim and stately dignity. It were easy to picture some Spanish cavalier, in black velvet or in shining armour, emerging from under the great door to receive a visitor. From all over the countryside it is visible, sharp and clear against the sky, with the two exquisite towns of Collioure and Port Vendres lying at its foot. It stands, unlike our more modern defences, boldly upon its hill, challenging the world to combat and demanding recognition and respect; yet its day is over, and it no longer serves any purpose in the world.

From Fort St. Elme we drove under the more modern redoubt, named after the brave Dugommier, up and up along the wonderful mountain-road which traverses in sharp diagonals the steep and rugged face of the haughty Albères, crowned here by the Tour de Madaloch. It is an unknown road, yet there is no finer in the world for the view it yields of the blue sea lying far below, of the rose-hued harbour-towns of Port Vendres and Paulilles and Collioure, and the wide plain of the Roussillon. In clear weather it yields visions of entrancing loveliness, with an infinite appeal to the seeing eye. There is the Perfect Harbour, lying still and blue and tranquil as a plate of sapphire; while just outside the wind is racing, leaving her white foaming footsteps upon the troubled sea. Straight up from the very edge of this harbour of refuge rise the precipitous mountains, into exalted and sharp pinnacles which cleave the swooning clouds. There is no rest anywhere save upon the surface of that small blue pool, which glows like a jewel in the sun. No force can disturb its serene and placid beauty, and time and again one's eyes, dazed with the brilliant heaven, the fierce aspiring peaks, the tumultuous valleys, rest with a profound satisfaction upon its cameo-like surface of calm.

One stands here upon one of the great dividing places of the world; upon a restless border, where men have warred for twenty centuries; where still to-day there breathes, in spite of the softening tendencies of modern life, the fierce spirit of the Frontier. This great road, which makes its sweeping diagonals across the cliffs, was built for no peaceful purpose. Its hard surface has borne the weight of heavy guns and re-echoed to the march of armed men. Every point of vantage about it is crowned with a fort or battery or redoubt. Its destination is the old battlemented tower of Madaloch, which looks far out into Spain, and in bygone days glowed with beacon fires, announcing the approach of invading armies. Here is a world consecrated to warfare, instinct with the very spirit of combat; and there, lying at its feet, a miracle of contrast, is the tranquil harbour into which twenty-five centuries ago there came, dropping her white sails before the wind, the galley of a Greek trader from Marseilles.

Everyone has heard of that famous Corniche Road which

runs along the mountains overlooking Nice and Monte Carlo; many have traversed it, and written about it, and made it famous, so that even the traveller hurrying round the world includes it in his itinerary; but no one, it seems, has ever heard of this wonderful Corniche Road here, upon the frontiers of France and Spain, overlooking the sheltered little world of Pyrene, the Port of Venus, whence the French sail to their loved Algiers. No one, it seems, has ever painted Collioure as one sees it from these heights, a little rose-red fishing-town, set in the midst of grey-green olive groves, and lapped by the blue Mediterranean where it swells under the mighty sea-fronting walls of its old castle and its singular church tower.

No one, it seems, has ever been here in May and seen the barren mountains, covered with a tapestry of wild flowers as luxuriant and splendid as those of an Alpine landscape, but so different in their character. No one, it seems, has seen the broom and the gorse spread like shining gold upon its slopes, its cork-woods blowing in the wind, its air laden with the rich warm perfume of thousands of acres of thyme and the other aromatic herbs which have made known all over the world the honey of Narbonne.

No one, it seems, has come here to see all these wonderful things; or, if he has, he has kept the knowledge of them jealously to himself: for this great Corniche Road which climbs from Port Vendres to the far uplifted Tower of Madaloch is all but unknown and all but unvisited; and the only soul we met in all this world, suspended as it were between sea and sky, was a shepherd with his tinkling flock.

All the low slopes are laid out in terraces of vines, and as one descends towards Collioure the vineyards are carried, with an industry that savours rather of poetry and romance than of material gain, to the very summit of isolated mountains, fronting the far-spread plain. Here, where the sun beats fiercely, and scarcely a tree finds sustenance, there is grown the rich heady wine of Banyuls, the port of Southern France.

A short byway leads one off the military road to the sheltered hermitage of La Consolation, where a fountain of clear water gushes forth, and terraced avenues of stately trees make an almost impenetrable shelter from the sun.

This cool and shady retreat is much visited in summer from Collioure; for it combines, after the manner of primitive lands, the sentiment of religion with the natural charm of a green picnicking place. There is a small chapel in which the devout find consolation, and those of a grateful mind leave mementoes of their stay. The painter leaves a sketch, the sick girl the crutch she has ceased to need, the casual pilgrim a piece of silver in the alms-box of the chapel. In some far and bygone day it was doubtless the haunt of a water-nymph or sylvan deity upon whose altar the good pagans of the countryside made their vows and offerings, and in the less secular years of Christianity it was wrapped about with a sort of mystic environment, which for some it still retains; but for the ordinary traveller it owes more to its green trees and its running water than to its dingy little chapel and its rather squalid exploitation as a hermitage.

CHAPTER V

THE COL OF PERTHUS

THE COL OF PERTHUS

The Col de Perthus is one of those historic highways which no traveller, with any sympathy with those who have gone before him, would wish to overlook. It is, moreover, a place of beauty, high up on the serrated wall of the Albères, which here divide France from Spain; and from the Fort of Bellegarde, which dominates it, there is an outlook far into the territories of both these nations. Through this gap in the mountains men and armies have passed since the beginning of time, and one has but to stand upon some commanding eminence, like the Rocher de Majorque, to realize its claim to primacy

among the Roussillon passes. One reaches it very easily by motor and train from Perpignan.

The railway embankment, as I travelled along it one morning in early June, was lined with scented golden broom, miles upon miles of it, of dazzling beauty, a highway of the Plantagenet. The Valley of the Tech deployed about us, wonderfully different to that of the Tet, with its cork-woods and dark trees, and its near line of the Albères cut against the sky, with white villages at foot.

At Le Boulou, "the Vichy of the Midi," I left the train, and drove two kilometres to the Établissement, crossing the Tech by a wire suspension-bridge. It stands, this Établissement, by the side of the national road, the ancient highway into Spain. It is one of those little inland watering-places, typical of this country, at which one can reckon on good food, a clean and comfortable bed, pleasant surroundings, and the necessary waters, but not on much luxury, or the kind of comfort my countrymen look for, and are unhappy without, in winter.

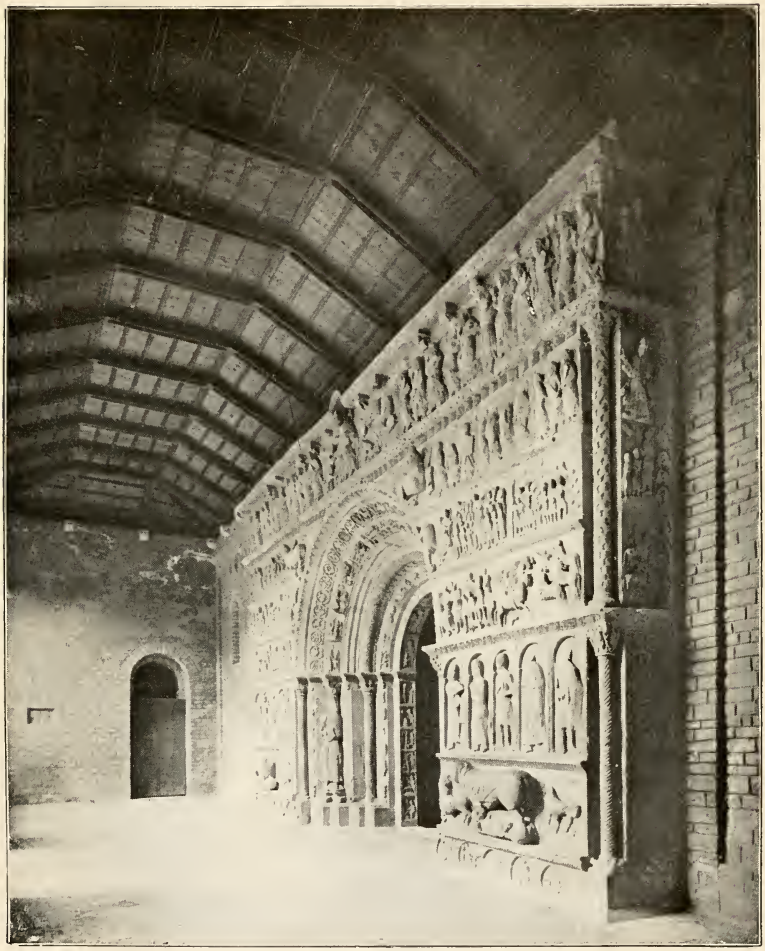
On the day of my visit I do not suppose that anywhere else in the world was there a quieter or more peaceable spot than Le Boulou. Across the road lay the rough park of the Établissement, with its deep green thorn hedge by the roadside, its avenues of old olive-trees, and its clumps of stone-pines within. Somewhat neglected it was, but quiet and unassuming. Fifty feet below it on the farther side flowed the little river, the Rom, shallow and wide; and beyond it, upon the rich alluvial soil, spread the kitchen-gardens and orchards of the Établissement. From the bluff I could see afar off the upstanding mountains, and near at hand the little chapel of St. Martin, which dates back to the ninth century, and is perhaps the oldest surviving specimen of Christian architecture in the Roussillon. Upon its frescoed walls there still survive old Latin inscriptions and paintings wrought 800 years ago.

It had been raining, and there was an incomparable softness and freshness in the air. The birds were singing in every tree, and from the cork-woods came the distant voice of the cuckoo, with its homely familiar sound. Here was a little place marvellously unlike any other I had yet

seen in the Pyrénées-Orientales—so varied is this small department of France—and the view as I looked up and down the shallow Rom, with its wide spaces and green silvering reeds, might have been a view upon the far-away banks of an Indian river.

Supposing that you were in this country in May, with a day or two upon your hands, and a desire within you to be alone in some peaceful spot, far from all centres of life, the nearest town two miles away, yet upon an inspiring highway rich with memories of great events, I would say go and pass them at Le Boulou. In the courtyard of the hotel there are some beautiful stone-pines under which one can sit and lunch; the proprietor is willing to please, his son who has been across the water to England, can talk some amusing English; and higher up in the small lateral valley, where the alkaline waters gush and are bottled for export, there are seats in plenty, and sheltered walks, and the charm of the unfrequented. Like most of the other mineral waters for which the Pyrenees are famous, these at Le Boulou have been known and utilized for centuries. They are of the same type as those which have made the fortune of Vichy, and are much esteemed in the neighbourhood. They were owned in the ninth century by the Benedictine monks of Arles, who built the little chapel of St. Martin in the Valley of the Rom. Boulou Town has its place in history, but its prosperity has declined since the opening of the railway. Till then it stood upon the great highway into Spain, and all who passed this way entered within its fortified walls and sought the hospitality of its inns. Portions of its old walls still survive, and fading parchments of the Kings of Aragon set forth its civic rights and privileges. But its proud days are over, and the world, busy upon other highways, comes little now to Boulou Town.

When I had seen all there was in Le Boulou, I went out and sat in the cool of the summer evening by the wayside, and waited for the auto-bus to come and take me on to the end of my journey. It was late in coming, and I passed an idle hour in observing the customary life: the yellow cornfields and the grey olive orchards, across which the wind went blowing; the wine-carts on the road; the horses



THE DOOR, RIPOLL ABBEY (*page* 221)

straining their sinews uphill, their vivid pelisses making a splash of colour under the plane-trees; the *tartanes* jogging on their way to Boulou Town; the daughters of the village swaying lazily up to the fountains and filling their water-pots, putting their lips to the spouting stream, and stopping on their way home to smile and talk to the amorous youth.

It was a quiet and a pleasing scene, culled as it were from the heart of this countryside; and yet through it all I seemed to hear the screaming of Hannibal's elephants, the steady tramp of the Roman legions, the war-cries of the Saracen invader, and the dying accents of Philip le Hardi as he came, borne upon a litter, down this very road.

"*Que vous dirai-je,*" *as old Muntaner used to say.* "*Partout où ils purent trotter ils allèrent un beau trot, après avoir passé le village de la Cluse; aucun ne se crut vraiment bien en sûreté jusqu'à ce qu'ils fussent parvenus au Boulou. Le Roi de France passa cette nuit au Boulou avec toute sa compagnie, mais le Cardinal se hata de prendre la route de Perpignan, sans se soucier, ni lui ni les autres, d'attendre l'arrière-garde qu'ils avaient laissée derrière eux; car les gens du Roi d'Aragon les auraient aussi envoyés Tous en Paradis.*"

When the auto-bus came, it was so full that I had to hold on as best I could outside, which somewhat added to the interest of the journey. For the little cobwebs that gather upon the surface of a quiet life soon get blown away under such novel conditions, and life becomes enjoyable enough when you realize that a moment's indifference may deprive you of its privileges. The road lay up the Valley of the Rom, and it presently brought us to a junction where three roads met. Here, under a majestic cork-tree, a number of these auto-buses were gathered together, and the scene in the soft evening sunlight was strangely picturesque. Gustave Doré, who made many sketches along this road, depicted this tree in one of his illustrations to the Fables of La Fontaine.

The road continued to ascend up the Valley of the Rom, winding amongst the beautiful cork-woods, their red trunks the colour of dark blood, and through the sombre Spanish looking hills. In the distance standing proudly upon its hill, was Bellegarde, the frontier fortress, and by the

edge of the river there were traces of the old Roman road under the hamlet of Ecluse. Here, it is believed, was the Roman station Ad Clausulas, and iron gates are said at one time to have closed the valley. Crossing the Rom, we drew up at the summit of the watershed, in the centre of the Route Nationale, which is also the High Street of Perthus. A granite pillar, marked "Limite de l'Espagne," indicated that we had reached the limits of Spain at any rate, if not those of France; and an old loop-holed blockhouse of the days of Louis Quatorze reminded us of bygone times, when upon a sudden emergency the defenders of Perthus could retire into its shelter and await reinforcement from the plain below.

Before the railway was made, and the engineers abandoned the old pass in the mountains for the tunnels and the little blue bays which fringe the Mediterranean shore, Perthus stood upon the traditional highway into Spain. That was thirty years ago, and the old innkeeper, who has been here all the time, speaks bitterly even now of the change. His inn is an old one with thick walls and small rooms, and it must have had many strange experiences. On the ground floor there is the large dark stable for the cattle, and beside it the only entrance to the inn is up a very narrow and steep staircase, designed rather for defence than for convenience. A small pane of glass let into the massive wall enables one to peer down into the sombre stable below. It is the sort of inn which reminds one of evil days, and the necessity for bolting and barring one's chamber door before turning in for the night. But we live in piping times, and I slept undisturbed, conscious only that my bed was both clean and comfortable, while the night air came blowing in untrammelled over a pot of carnations on the balcony outside. Le Perthus seemed to me a very still and quiet place, extraordinarily picturesque in its environment, the humble heir to many glories.

At seven o'clock in the morning the innkeeper hobbled upstairs with my *potage au lait*, and spoke to me, while I consumed it, of his five years in Algiers as a sergeant of infantry, to which the blue-ribboned medal on the wall bore testimony; and of his bitter experiences as a soldier in the

Army of the East under Bourbaki in 1870-71, when for three months he marched through the winter snow. His eldest son, he told me, was in California, as *chef de cuisine* at an hotel in the Yellowstone National Park—a long call from this strange little village in the defiles of the Pyrenees!

At eight o'clock I went over to Monsieur Freixes, the Gibbon of Perthus, and finding his front door open, was welcomed by him into his study—a world of books. Monsieur Freixes is so notable a personality that I must introduce him formally to the notice of the reader. I met him first at the Bureau des Archives at Perpignan, a little old man seated on a stool, immersed in a crabbed manuscript of the thirteenth century. We fell into conversation, and I was charmed with his learning and his devotion to his subject. I had read a little of the Col de Perthus, and knew of its historic claims. But here was its incarnation and the defender of its fame.

A long life passed at this historic gateway has been inspired by its associations, and Monsieur Freixes has been led by the magic influence of Place to study its ancient annals and reconstruct the great events that have transpired here. When he leaves his home at Perthus, the house in which his father lived before him, it is but to go to Perpignan, and there to pass his day amongst the yellow archives, building up his theses of the Roman Road, the Trophies of Pompey, the March of Hannibal, and of all that has transpired here since the mighty conqueror took his way to Rome twenty-one centuries ago.

For the last forty years Monsieur Freixes has lived at Perthus, never sleeping away from his home, and leaving it only to visit Perpignan twice a week, except in mid-winter, when it is too cold to travel. Before the auto-buses began to run he used to go by "dilly" to Boulou, starting at five a.m., and reaching his stool in the muniment-room at Perpignan at eight. The son of a small tradesman at Perthus, he studied medicine at Paris, but returned to Perthus to help in his father's business, which he pursued until thirteen years ago, giving the whole of his time and energy to the selling of cloth and other traffic across the counter. Then he retired from business, and thinking it but a poor use of life to spend it like other retired tradesmen, "in

eating, drinking, and sleep," he took to books and to the study of his Col de Perthus. He had never, he told me, wholly forgotten his Latin and his Greek, and thirteen years of scholarly toil since then have made him proficient in the classics necessary to his peculiar studies. He has them all upon his tongue's tip, and quotes with point and facility from Strabo, Polybius, Pomponius Mela, Livy, Rufus Festus Avienus, and all the other Pundits. Books have taken the place of bales of cloth upon his shelves, and the large square room with its brick floor, facing the highway where it descends into Spain, is full of learning. French, Catalan, German, Italian, and English, alike bring grist to his mill, and he quotes with equal, if a modest, facility from Milton and the Immortal who wrote "Twinkle, twinkle, little star."

He has found in the "Hispania Sagrada" an itinerary of the ninth century, culled by an industrious monk from a lost Latin original, which gives the main stations on the Roman road from Constantinople to Cadiz. Amongst these appear Narbonne, Ruscino, Ad Clausulas, Juncerium; and there is little doubt in M. Freixes' mind that the road passed this way from Ecluse to Jonquieres in Spain. But here we turn the ashes of a controversy which long stirred the savants of Roussillon, for it touched the very life of the people. It awoke into something like passion when the railway which crosses the Pyrenees from France into Spain had to be made, and the claims of the Col de Perthus and of the sea-coast were at variance. The railroad was made along the coast, says Monsieur Freixes, to satisfy political wire-pullers, at a cost greatly in excess of what it need have entailed over the Col de Perthus, for it is a much longer and more difficult route. "Do you think," he says with scornful impatience, "that the Romans would have chosen that way? And as for Alart, he wilfully misread, and Yes! even burked, the documents, for other than a scholar's reasons." Now, the learned Alart was once keeper of the archives at Perpignan, and a Pundit of no mean repute.

Leaving these time-worn controversies and the cold big room in which the brains of so many dead men slumber, we went out into the warm and vital sunlight, and walked down the High Street, flanked on one side by houses that are in

France, and on the other by those that are in Spain. Surely there is not such another street in the world? A stone pillar bore the inscription "Gallia-Hispania" on its four sides. One has but to cross this singular thoroughfare to pass from one country into the other, and merchants here have a shop on each side of the road, to facilitate their illicit trade. We presently came to two handsome stone pillars bearing on the French face inscriptions graven in the name and time of Louis XIII. Above these there burgeoned in marble the lilies of France, but their place has been void since the revolutionaries tore them down and sundered them in pieces. On the Spanish face the same inscriptions, with Spanish names and titles, appear in elegant Castilian, and above them the royal arms of Spain have been restored by the sculptor Belloc. The Bourbon lilies were replaced by the Imperial arms in the days of Napoleon III., but went the way of all other imperial emblems after Sedan; and the Third Republic has not sought to fill the void.

Here the road finally passes, both sides of it, into the keeping of Spain, and the Castilian sergeant at the small outpost speaks neither Catalan nor French. Thus in one footstep is the transition accomplished. While I stood here a young Spanish soldier crossed the line, with his Catalan sweetheart, forgetful of the bayonet by his side. The sergeant called him back, and gravely instructed him that he must leave his arms behind on entering the territory of another Power.

We climbed hence through the beautiful cork-woods, by the white military road, to the proud fortress of Bellegarde, whose name (of Bella Guardia) enshrines the memory of the Sicilian mariners of the great Admiral Roger de Loria, who held the Col of Panissas during the retreat of Philip le Hardi. The hillside was gay with mallows and rock-roses and perfumed lavender, and from it we looked down upon the long street of Perthus, and across the wooded interspace to the lofty height of St. Christophe and its ancient fortress, like an eagle's eyrie, in the sun. There amidst the dark woods climbed the old mediæval road up which they bore the dying King, Philip le Hardi, on his disastrous retreat from Spain. There went the silken litter of the King; the chivalry of France led by Philip le Bel and Charles de Valois; the

Count of Foix in advance with his 500 horsemen in full armour; the rear-guard of 1,500 heavy cavalry; the men-at-arms on foot; the long train of those who bore the treasure and the baggage of the King. There rode the Cardinal Legate, white with fear, the representative of him who claimed to bestow kingdoms at his will. And there, shimmering and burgeoning in the sun, hard by the King's litter, was carried the oriflamme of France. Upon this very hill where we stood crowded upon that memorable day the seamen of Sicily, the *almogavares* of Spain, like hounds in leash, fiercely shouting and calling upon the King of Aragon who stood by with his knights and horsemen, to be at them. And there, when oriflamme and King had safely passed, and his men could no longer be restrained, Peter of Aragon stood aside, and let them rush down and glut their avarice upon the cloths of gold and silver, the jewels and the plate, of the French King, and their fury upon the devoted remnant of his guard. It is so easy to picture it all with the words of the brave old chronicler ringing in one's ears, and the scene of that tragic episode spread out before one here.

Far down in the valley below, where the Rom murmurs, its very name a legacy from the Eternal City, there are two small heights which stand out apart on either side by the little stream. That on the right, said my companion, pointing to it with his stick, bore the trophies of Pompey, and that on the left the altar of Julius Cæsar. In later years there rose here a Moorish castle, and where the trophies of Pompey stood, a feudal castle of the Oms and other great lords of Roussillon, dismantled, like so many others, by Louis XI. of France. There was Ad Clausulas, and here is now Ecluse.

The view from Bellegarde, before one turns the watershed, spreads over the cork-woods and the steep descending slopes of the Albères down to the plain of the Tech, the intervening Aspres, the farther plain of Roussillon and the Tet, and the far-distant heights of Tautavel and the Corbières, which overlook the land of Languedoc. Thus in one glance the whole width of French Catalonia lies exposed, while in the west there surges up above it in majesty and grandeur the snow-crowned King of this realm, the Canigou.

One has but to turn the corner of the road to look away from all this into Spain. There below one is the Col de Panissas, with its old blockhouse of the days of Louis Quatorze, its cypress-bordered cemetery of the forgotten Convent of Panissas, and its ruins amongst which the sheep are feeding, of the little chapel in which the Kings of France and Aragon and Majorca met to make a treaty of peace in the spring of 1291. Beyond lies the long valley of Jonquieres, and the white highway to Figueras—Spain in fact; while against the skyline one sees the Spanish fort in which Dugommier died. He was buried at Bellegarde, where the proudest spirit might be content to be at rest, but his bones were exhumed and carried away, with singular infelicity, to Perpignan.

There are times when these lonely heights, these solemn woods, so fraught with memories of departed men and great powers that have been, are lit up by the searchlights of the British fleet at anchor in Rosas Bay, and the watcher upon the mountain-tops can see the Dreadnoughts of our Empire riding at lordly ease upon the blue Mediterranean waters. Then are those who see these sights reminded that there is a Great Power in the world whose frontiers are less easily defined than their own.

The sublime and the ridiculous are seldom far off from each other in a world of ironies, so, as we came away inspired by the sights and memories that belong to this noble belvedere, my attention was drawn to a building in the valley, erected by some German exploiters who had been expelled from Baden. By a strange freak of ingenuity they chose this remote little village, hidden here amidst the cork-woods and rough mountains that divide France from Spain, for the location of a gambling-hell. For a season or two people came, whom no other inducement would have brought here, but the project languished, and the casino was closed. It stands now by the roadside, an abortive product of the materialism of our day.

Monsieur Freixes, who accompanied me throughout this journey, made it very pleasant for me by his learning and devotion. The city of Bab, whence Abu-Neza-al-Shemi fled before Abdur Rahman to Llivia, was, he assured me, no other than

his beloved Perthus; and for proof of this and of all other of his claims on behalf of this celebrated pass, he referred me to his forthcoming work on the subject. Its date of publication is yet uncertain, for he has all a scholar's disinclination for finality. I left him, reflecting as I went on The Key to all the Mythologies and the labours of Mr. Casaubon. But Monsieur Freixes has two points in his favour: he is a bachelor, free to arrange his life as he pleases; and, though he is close upon threescore years and ten, he lives in one of the healthiest villages in the world, in which ninety is esteemed a proper age; and throughout his long and laborious life he has never known a day in bed. One of the secrets, he tells me, of his vitality is that he never dines, his last meal, an ample *déjeuner*, being taken at noon. I sometimes think that the price of many a supper must have gone to buy those noble volumes on his shelves.

THE VIRGIN OF NURIA

STE. MARIA DE RIPOLL (*page* 223)

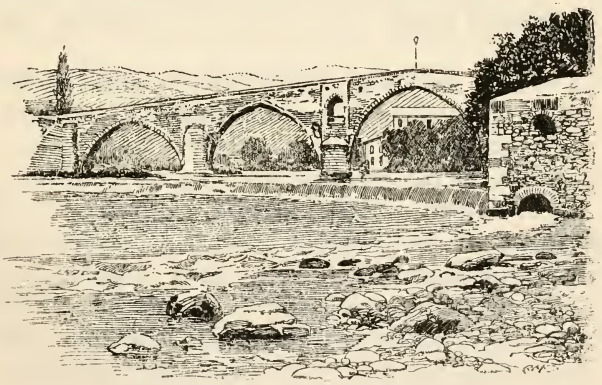
BOOK VI

SPANISH TRAVEL

CHAPTER I

EN ROUTE

In bygone days I should have passed into Spain from Le Perthus without any other transition; but the highway runs elsewhere now, so I retraced my steps to Perpignan, there to enter the Barcelona express on its way from Paris. It



BRIDGE OVER THE TER

was a soft and exquisite June morning, and the roses as we passed Le Boulou were in rich abundance in the villas and country-houses by the wayside. The auto-bus was as usual overfull, with many cheery passengers clinging on outside at various angles away from the car; but I found a seat at the feet of the chauffeur, and greatly enjoyed the fresh morning air and the attractive landscape as we raced past at not too

high a speed. The auto-bus is the poor man's car, and it is very pleasant travelling by it in fine weather, when an outside seat is to be had. Unlike the private car, which is exclusive, it is in touch with the life of the country. It stops to pick up a man as he comes hurrying up a lane, to drop a family at a corner where a cart and pony are waiting to carry them through the long vineyards across the shining plain, to some *métairie* embosomed amidst the dark trees. Its heavy bulk and solid tyres do not search out inequalities in a road worn with traffic, as your light pneumatic car. And your companions, taken from all classes of the countryside, provide you with the Unexpected, which all good travellers love; as when, for example, some resolute old countrywoman annexes your seat, stolidly unmoved by the symbols of a prior right; or a pretty girl, with her frank Catalan air, favours you with her company on the box-seat. In rain or mistral, or upon a blazing summer afternoon with the dust white upon the road, it is doubtless another matter; but this was a dewy morning, an hour after dawn, and life seemed good, and the world a pleasant place to live in, and wayfaring the only true vocation.

At the station the good woman at the buffet insisted on giving me a bunch of narcissus, fresh from the Cerdagne, and these perfumed the long journey into Spain. After Port Vendres the train ran through arid country, past little blue bays, and vineyards which covering every available acre, reached down to the edge of the lazy swelling waters. Tunnel followed tunnel, and it was hard to believe that any Roman road ever passed this way. At Banyuls-sur-Mer we passed the rising watering-place of the Roussillon, with its villas and curving shore and its fishing-fleet glinting in the sun. At Cap Cerbère, where the French frontier now ends, we reached the *Finis Galliæ* of Pomponius Mela, who wrote geography during the life of Christ; and at Port Bou we were in Spain. Here the gendarme gave way to the Guardia Civile; French ceased, as if by magic, to be spoken; mere men and women became caballeros and señoras, Spanish courtliness took the place of the more matter-of-fact French manner, and royal arms and blazonings reminded us that other ideals would now prevail. The landscape remained the same, but

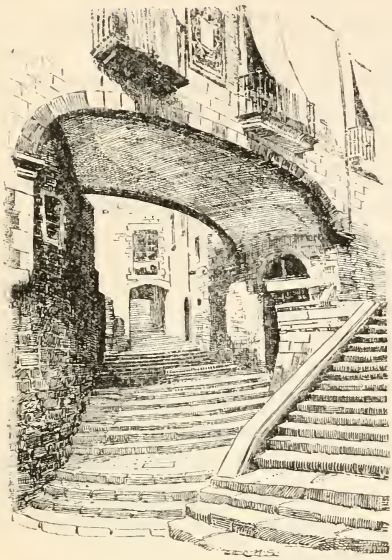
subtle differences in the homes of the people insensibly led one into the atmosphere of another land. The red roofs of the Roussillon plain gave place to more sombre hues, the convent and the monastery became more frequent, the balconied houses showed awnings which fluttered in the breeze. Leaving the Pyrenees and the sea, the train struck inland to Figuieres, of which the local proverb says that it belongs to Spain in time of peace, and to France in time of war.

The season here was more advanced; the corn lay in sheaves, and the peasant took his siesta in the fields, his red or violet cap and scarlet sash making splashes of colour against the golden stubble. Persian wheels and old wells reminded one of the long dominion of Asia over these Southern lands. The great wall of the Albères, which ever faces one in the Roussillon, rose now behind us; but the Canigou still shone predominant above the world.

We ran suddenly into Gerona, whose old walls and superb cathedral rose up wonderfully from the commonplace plain. Here was something which, even for the passing traveller, had a message which bade him stay and wonder; and I for one was well content to descend at Gerona.

CHAPTER II

GERONA



GERONA

The grandeur of Gerona exceeds one's expectations. Ten minutes in this immemorial town, the Gerunda of the Romans, the scene of so many heroic exploits, the hearth of Spanish patriotism, convince one that it surpasses in magnificence and beauty, and every sort of architectural charm, all that French Catalonia has to offer. Here is a city of pride, built by a people of stately notions in days of exaltation; and expressive, therefore, of something greater and more noble than a bourgeois commercialism. It tells one that even here on the ultimate confines of Spain, and far from its proud Castilian heart, the sentiment of a great people may be felt.

I step out of my hotel, whose marble floors and staircase with their hint of magnificence, put the grim old inns of the Roussillon to shame, and within a few yards see finer houses, larger *patios*, and greater interiors, than a long day in Perpignan and much research can show me. Here is the beautiful Catalan arch in its natural home; here are the delicate windows, with their fluted columns of marble that looks like steel, which I have so much admired at the Hôtel de Ville; and here are what you will find in no part of the Roussillon —superb flights of stone steps, and stairways reaching up to magnificent buildings, escutcheoned and enriched with elaborate carvings. Out of a narrow sombre street still wrapped in mediæval gloom, I emerge suddenly upon the

THE CANIGOU

To face page 200

great *plaza* of the Palace of Justice, from which there rises, flooded with warm, golden sunlight, the west front (reckoned commonplace!) of the cathedral. Yet, with its flight of ascending stairs, its soaring campanile, it is nothing less than majestic. Looking back from its colonnaded terrace and its glowing marbles, what a view there is over the city to the blue hills beyond! The air about me is laden with warm incense, which hangs invisible like an aura about the great portal. Turning the corner, with a feeling of being suspended, as it were, in mid-air between the dark and narrow streets below and the sunlit pinnacles above, I cross the grass-grown court paved with granite, to the princely mansion of the Bishop of Gerona, with his arms emblazoned on its walls. Yet observe the inextinguishable simplicity and tolerance of the East. Just here there is a small flock of goats feeding on the tufts of grass, the shepherd-lad prone upon the episcopal threshold, unmoved by the ceremonial passing of great personages. The southern porch of the cathedral is richly carved, and enriched with figures of the twelve Apostles, who shelter under an old and humble roof of the brown tiles of the country.

It is six o'clock, and while the sun is still glowing on the west façade, and the swallows are circling about its mighty walls, I enter the solemn interior. Every step I take is over the tomb of some person of consequence in his day, his arms and the circumstances of his life engraved upon the spacious stones.

What mysteries of colour! What silence! What majesty of gloom! I am the only human soul within this mighty temple, and am stricken dumb with wonder.

Yet how eloquent are those circular windows in the dark wall that divides the east end from the nave, centres of light and animation in the very midst of this silent church!

What up-springing arches! Fraught with all the pride and aspiration of the architect, they speak of his vaulting spirit, as of one who would overcome all limitations in the attainment of his end.

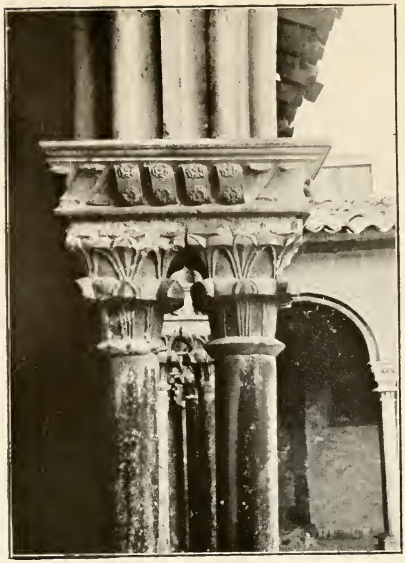
Ah! and how that west window glows in the evening sunlight, like a heart on fire, in contrast with the coldness and the burdening darkness about it!

The high-altar is shut in with solid iron bars that are spiked and locked, for it is of great price and high antiquity. Wrought of silver and alabaster, it was bestowed upon the cathedral by Ermesinde, wife of Count Ramon Borel, nine centuries ago. The reredos behind, the rich baldachino, the Bishop's throne of solid marble—these also are things of price. The nave might be the most beautiful in the world if it had but another bay. Even an untrained eye can see this at a glance. The choir placed midway in the nave detracts from its simple and stately character. It is not given to anyone to be perfect. Let us rejoice that there is anything even as good and perfect as this.

I pass from it all to a balcony on the west wall, and there before me lie the green cornfields and swelling hills, the river curving through the lines of houses, and the sun setting in flame upon the soft horizon. Even as I look, his golden orb fills for a moment the middle arch of the old campanile of San Feliu with a blinding light—San Feliu, which first came into being 1,200 years ago, and sheltered the Christians at prayer when Gerona lay humbled under the banners of Islam.

Coming into Gerona from Perpignan is indeed like passing from the house of a good bourgeois to the mansion of a Prince; and if the truth must be spoken, I prefer the society of Princes.

Here also is Spanish life—the life of a bygone age and century, of a land that is outside the comity of Europe. Here is a land of late hours and indulgent ways. Even at three o'clock, when I arrive, people are still seated at lunch; and at half-past eight in the evening the cafés are still full, and no one has gone in to dinner. The Rambla, under the dark blue sky and shining moon, is crowded with people, and the lively scene is charged with interest. Everybody seems to walk about here, showing that democracy may exist as well under a Crown as under a Republic. The girls are less pretty here, less nobly formed, than in the Roussillon; though every now and then one sees a face of haunting and poetic beauty. To middle age the South is ever unkind and inconsiderate. But it is mostly the young



DETAIL OF THE CLOISTERS, MONASTERY OF RIPOLL (*page* 222)

RIBAS (*page* 228)

and the joyful who frequent here. The old and the tired, and the unhappy and the very poor, stay in their quiet streets.

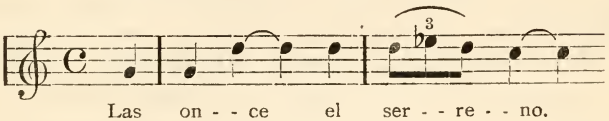
From the Rambla, bright with lights and animation, I pass on as the night advances, to the stone bridge that spans the River Onar; and halfway across it, I stay to enjoy the view, as of Florence and Venice intermingled. Under the soft moonlight it is as lovely as in those favoured cities. The great stone houses rise up with their projecting balconies, sheer and straight, from the river's edge; the lights from their windows gleam and glitter across the water. The more stately have gardens and terraces opening on the river, and, as I look up this curving waterway, I get glimpses into many a fascinating interior. High above the crescent of tall houses rise the proud cathedral and the spire of San Feliu, with their Latin grace. The blue lane of sky above the houses is gemmed with the greater stars, and the half-moon rides high in the western heavens. I can hear the river murmuring under the walls, and the sound of music from enchanted balconies. One might pass the night here, it is so beautiful, so reminiscent of the incomparable Queen-City herself.

But a few steps from the bridge, and I am again in the narrow streets, whence all kinds of windows and doors open on the inner life of Gerona. Here in a half-lit archway is a stable, the horses contentedly feeding after their day's toil; here is a family taking its evening meal in a little circle about the table, all visible from the street; here is the poor man's restaurant, the small dealer's shop; and above all these are the balconies trailing their baskets full of pink geraniums, their masses of scented carnations. How good it feels to be alive on such a night as this in a Latin city, with its soft and balmy air, its cloudless sky, its stillness unbroken by any wind, its measureless appeal!

So good, indeed, that sleep comes with difficulty. It is warmer indoors, and the great clocks of Gerona sound with a Spanish unpunctuality. Midnight begins striking soon after eleven, and continues at intervals from belfry after belfry till nearly one a.m. Then comes the night-watchman, El Sereno, lantern and halberd in hand, chanting up the

streets "*Ave Maria purissima*—the night is fine and no wind stirring," and his musical voice goes booming through the night; just as old Pepys might have heard it in London

ELEVEN O'CLOCK: THE WATCHMAN.



when Charles II. was King. People here are late in coming home to bed, and, withal, it seems that one's best course is to sleep by day and remain awake at night.

But the morning with its sunlight tempts one back into the streets of Gerona. The pealing of the cathedral organ, as its music pours out through its mighty walls into the city, draws me irresistibly within its circuit. Once more I enter, to find the choir full of old Canons who look like Doges in their crimson robes, and priests at the high-altar in rich golden vestments, and a crowd of acolytes about them. Presently they form a procession, one of the priests bearing the Sacred Host before him (*the very Body and Blood of Christ!*), the acolytes swinging their gleaming censers, and two small lads marching forward with heavy silver candlesticks. The aged celebrant climbs up to the pulpit, rich with crimson velvet; his coadjutor with the Host stands behind, a statuesque figure; the candle-bearers light the pages of the book, and the service proceeds in sonorous chanting cadences that echo and re-echo through the solemn building. At intervals the censer is swung before the open pages, as though to perfume the very text; and then all descend and return to the altar, the acolytes and candle-bearers very active, like skirmishers, in contrast with the solemn and apparelled priests. And so the great drama goes on from day to day and century to century, and behind the priestcraft, and the intricacy of ceremonial, and the deadening routine, is the striving of humanity to link itself with Immortality and pierce the sable curtain of Death, who remains the master of us all.

I pass hence into the cloister, which is full of sunlight,

and its postern door being open, come once more upon the view over Gerona, its green fields, and swelling hills, and winding silver river. Here, amongst the tombs of the departed, an old Canon, with a silver cross of ceremony and a purple biretta, is pacing, glad as it seems to me, to escape from the ritual within.

The cloisters are singularly like those of Elne, but with a grander environment. They mark the passage of romanesque art from France into Spain along this immemorial highway. In the centre of the court there is a well-head of cut grey stone of noble proportions, and all along the walls are tombs and memorials of the dead, while the floor is slabbed with escutcheoned stones. The capitals and bas-reliefs of the solid pillars have suffered more from time than the harder marble of Elne.

From here I pass once more down the great cathedral stairs, touching with my hands the very walls of the house in which Mariano Alvarez de Castro lodged during his immortal defence of Gerona. The road to San Feliu's Church runs past it, under the cyclopean arch of the Sobre Portas, whose mighty bastions are in harmony with the heroic character of Gerona. One can see from here the old Roman wall and the great flanking towers and flying buttresses of the cathedral. A few steps farther on and embedded now in a convent, are the slender pillars of an old *hummam*, in which the Moor relaxed his limbs and took his ease when Gerona lay at his mercy.

The Church of San Feliu is given up to-day to the cult of the Virgin, its altars hung with blue, and her statue heaped with fresh flowers. Only women are here. On the left of the nave is a domed chapel, in which lie buried the remains of Alvarez de Castro, his tomb of Carrara marble crowned by the mourning figure of his wife; and at the far end, in a case of glass and gold, is the mummy of St. Narcissus of Gerona, whose face, like that of Pharaoh, one can look upon after all these centuries, while his swathed limbs are wrapped in jewelled vestments, and his skeleton feet in slippers of beaten gold. The interior of the case is hung with Orders and Stars and other baubles of a secular cult, placed here, with Spanish irony, upon the death of those who gloried in

them in life. *Vanitas vanitatum; omnia est vanitas.* Those who struggle for such adornments might well come and spend a half-hour here.

In this glass case, also, there is a roll of cotton-wool, of which you may take away a bit and put it in your ears when sore afflicted. Even as I look, an old parish priest who has come from a long way off, approaches the embalmed saint with a childlike devotion, and carries away with him a fragment of the wool to ease his pain. But St. Narcissus is growing old, the world is changing, and fifteen hundred years is long as men reckon time.

The Church of San Pedro de Galligans stands upon the outskirts of Gerona, its principal apse projecting beyond the town wall. Hence it bore the brunt of the French cannonade, its cloisters, which now appropriately enshrine memorials of the siege, being shattered almost to bits during the bombardment. It has been restored; yet what an air as of Spanish neglect, and a sort of hopelessness, characterizes this place! The very steps of the church outside are made of old funeral stones that bear fading inscriptions of the Gothic age, and the man who takes care of it looks like one who has seen the futility of life and retains only the faculty of endurance. It is the prime quality of the Spanish race.

The museum is without a catalogue; the inscriptions which seek to fill its place are type-written and faded; and though its contents include many things that are of interest and beauty, the sombre spirit of a decaying people broods over them all. Its royal portraits are devoid of majesty, like the pitiless Goyas of Madrid. Alfonso XII. is here depicted, with his miserable little body, his weak and pathetic little face; and his Queen, but with a nobler air, stands holding the baby Alfonso in her arms. Isabella looks what she was.

A museum is always a tragic place. Here, still protracting their strange existence, are the skulls and bones of neolithic men, with some of the beautiful but elementary weapons they made for their use; here are remnants of the Greek civilization of Ampurias, inscriptions and fragments of what once was Rome. A frieze shows how the vine and the olive were converted to human use, and how little the basis of life

in this country has changed. Coming to later times, there are Visigothic sarcophagi, and the figure of a warrior in the guise of Bacchus, holding an escutcheoned shield before him and a spear in his hand, the clumsy forerunner of the chivalrous knight. Arab tiles tell of the seventy-five years during which Gerona was a part of Asia. The primitive art of early Christian times in this rude corner of the world is displayed in a figure of the Virgin, heavy with child and in the agony of maternity; in a Christ crucified upon a cross of his own height, with his mother and disciples about him; and in numerous tombs of the small shape common in the days when bones were exhumed and re-interred. The Jew also is here, with his Hebrew inscriptions and his fidelity to the unchanging customs of his race. Finally there are relics of the Great Siege — cannon-balls and old muskets and personal souvenirs of Alvarez de Castro, and the camp-bed and travelling trunk of Marshal Augereau. A study also, by some recent sculptor, of Gerona as a dying athlete who has reached the feet of Fame, and with a last supreme effort inscribes his name upon her tablets—GERONA, 1809—while the goddess leans forward tenderly with her crown.

As the soft June evening draws to its close, I find myself outside Gerona, upon the grassy banks of the united Guell and Organa, the grey river rushing and foaming at my feet, and the heroic city, with its proud towers and curving waterway, glowing in the last rays of the sun. Here is a green and spacious spot, far from the life and sounds of Gerona, to which its people come for rest and recreation. Near me a small family is seated on the grass, taking their evening meal out of doors. Across the river, higher up, the country carts are fording its shallows; a woman with her child is busily washing her household linen. It is a scene of peace, dominated by immortal memories of war. For in the same glance one can see the old time-honoured walls, the brooding fortress of Mont Juich, the small tower of St. Peter of the Galligans, whose cloisters were shattered during the siege, and one wonders how the cathedral and the beautiful Church of San Feliu escaped destruction.

But that was a hundred years ago. In a modern

bombardment these noble campaniles and towers would be reduced to ruin in a few hours. A great change has come over the world since Gerona was besieged in 1809; the business of war has become one of the most intricate and elaborate that calls for human effort; and Spain—Spain whose fleets and armies were once the terror of the world—has fallen in the race, exhausted and broken.

If Gerona were ours, how proud we should be of her! how our people would come from the corners of the earth to look upon her and be glad! But in Spain, even in progressive Catalan, the burden of age and decay lies heavy upon her; she stands here beautiful indeed, but forlorn and neglected—wrapped in the mists of forgetfulness, life moving but sluggishly within her walls.

Yet everything about her is on a noble scale: her cyclopean bastions and old walls and ascending flights of stairs and her proud and mighty cathedral; and stone, that most perfect of building material, is lavishly used by her and finely cut. No wonder she made an heroic defence, no wonder she wrote her name on the immortal pages of history, this stately and genuine old Spanish town!

The mere change from France, with her airs of metallic prosperity, her self-conscious march towards success, her love of worldly things, to the simplicity, the humanity, the mellowness of such an old Spanish town, is fraught with charm. It is like passing from the West to the East.

One has but to sit down quietly outside some doorway and wait, and the scroll of its life is unrolled before one. Flocks of goats come by with their tinkling bells, and people come out with their coppers for a cup of milk; the beggar pleads with you for an alms, and there is no one to forbid him, for "Live and let live" is the maxim all over the East. Processions of the Church go by, the priests in black velvet and gold, the acolytes in lace and scarlet, swinging their censers and holding great candlesticks before them; and people who are seated rise and take off their hats.

On market-days the streets are crowded with a double line of temporary booths, and peasant women display their poultry and their vegetables and fruit under the shelter of big

A STREET IN URGELL (*page* 298)

THE ROAD TO THE COL DE TOSAS (*page* 232)

umbrellas; the butcher hacks off pieces of meat on his table under a pitiless sun; the cobbler plies his trade, and the sherbet-boy goes up and down with his cold drinks and a lump of ice.

It is an easy-going philosophic people, courteous but democratic, with the simple democracy of the East. The obliging barber smokes placidly as he shaves you, while his wife pops her head out of a mediæval pane in the staircase wall and engages in the conversation; the waiter treats you as a confidential friend. The lottery-ticket seller haunts your dining-room at the best hotel; the newsboy comes up the marble stairs in his rags and his bare feet; children scuttle about upon your threshold, and walk gravely up and down the Rambla at night, amongst the officers in uniform and the pretty ladies. At the late dinner a little girl of five, with her hair beribboned and arranged, sits with her parents, looking for all the world as if she had stepped out of a picture by Velasquez.

It is a charming life, but, alas! it has its failings, and in the upshot it unhappily spells decay. Amongst all those who go to and fro on the Rambla at night, few are big and strong, many are diseased and derelict. Poverty is but too apparent. Where, I wonder, does the heroic spirit of Gerona reside? if, indeed, it be still latent in this people.

CHAPTER III

BARCELONA

COLUMNS, RIPOLL MONASTERY

I LEFT Gerona at six o'clock in the morning, and my last impression of it was of a strange and furtive little man, who makes his living by waking people early. His is one of those small occupations — almost a byproduct — for which there is scope only in very poor countries, in which what little there is is minutely subdivided. He had the mad look that so many Spaniards have; and it was not by chance, I think, that Don Quixote was depicted as of unsound mind. Whether it be due to poverty or temperament, the Spaniard gives me the impression of having a larger strain of insanity in his composition than the people of Northern lands.

It was a hot morning and wearisome. The railway-stations had the same stark neglected air that they have in the East —everything about them reduced to the necessary minimum. The small square station-house, the long lines of glowing rails, the laden trucks on sidings in the sun, conveyed the impression that the railway was here for the sole purpose of a carrying trade, and that it formed no part, as in our delicious England, of the intimate life of the people. The refreshment-rooms were dirty and bare and fly-ridden, the waiting-rooms, four walls with benches. There was none of the stir and animation of neighbouring Roussillon; no rich countryside as in the Valley of the Tet; no glorious spectacle like that of the Canigou. It was dull and sultry and monot-

onous, and the railway was an exotic feature, like a strand of wire forced through the pliant woof of the country.

The landscape was hilly, with woods of the umbrella-pine and cork, and an underworld of broom and cistus; the cultivation poor by comparison with that of France.

At Hostalrich, old walls and towers upon a hill spoke of the Middle Ages, which still linger in the atmosphere of this country and in the blood of its people. Next came Breda, with its castle perched like an eagle upon a peak, very different to the quiet Dutch town set in its soft Low Country landscape, whose surrender to Spain furnished Velasquez with the theme of his incomparable picture. At Gualba the Orient clamoured for recognition in a rococo villa that was garnished and painted in a style to delight a Hindu. Here also, there was a performing bear who danced to the sound of a tambourine and the stick of his master, a gipsy, with the typical face and colour of those whom in India we group together under the name of the Criminal Tribes. Seeing me in the train, he came on to the platform with his bear and his tambourine and his fawning gestures, precisely as he would have done in India; and the station-master, seeing him trespass thus, drove him off with abuse and a wave of his hand, just as he would have done over there. The gipsy had all the abject, the soft, pleading, apologetic air of the down-trodden creature of low caste, and he looked up to me with precisely the same pathetic appeal, as to one of a higher order (though merely a traveller) from the small tyranny of his own countrymen. Who can doubt the origin of the Spanish gipsy? The man might have come here straight from Hindustan.

At Granollers, which is a town of some size, the *garçon* came along, trundling a nice little breakfast of omelettes and sausages still frizzling in their frying-pans. Where else in Europe does one see such gratifying sights?

Nearing Barcelona the cultivation improved; factory chimneys began to appear; there was more stir and bustle; the sky was less blue, and the air grew dusk with smoke, and it soon became apparent that we were entering a modern commercial city.

That is what Barcelona is at first sight, and what it is

most proud of being. Here, if anywhere in Spain, resides the spirit of modernity, the faculty of organization, the power of accumulating wealth by trade. And here are visible symptoms of civic pride, the manifest desire to build a great city and equip it with great buildings, and keep alive the memory of its departed sons.

All this is well; but under the rich and prosperous surface there is present all the terrible slag of civilization, the waste matter of the modern struggle for life. As to the great buildings, they are, if the truth must be spoken, vulgar and otiose. They have a certain originality, which may culminate some day in something fine and noble; but that day is not yet. The long streets of big houses, the glittering tramcars, the shops and squares and ornamental parks, are all part of the customary claptrap of nineteenth-century civilization. One would not come a long way to look upon such things; though even these, from their exotic palms and strange outlines, lend a certain charm to this old Catalan city. Happily, Barcelona has preserved splendid memorials of a more dignified past, and these it was my purpose to explore.

Turning down the Calle Fernando, the Bond Street of Barcelona, I presently emerged on the square which is flanked by the Casa Consistoral, or Townhall, erected in 1337, and the Diputacion, or old Parliament House of Catalonia. Both are noble survivors of the historic past of Barcelona; but both have had modern and incongruous façades imposed upon them, as though the citizens were ashamed of their beginnings and anxious to look as new as possible. Yet the instant one enters the vestibule of the Diputacion one is back in the Middle Ages. Here are vast arches, a majestic staircase, slender and beautiful colonnades, and the typical *svelte* marble pillars of the Catalan window, which might be of steel, so slight are they and so little fitted, seemingly, to sustain the burden imposed upon them. And here indeed they have bent under the arduous task But how simple and beautiful they are! To come upon them fresh from gazing upon such a monument as the Custom House, or the new mansion of a tradesman in the Paseo de Gracia, is like waking from a bad dream upon the freshness of the dawn.

The Palace of the Diputacion retains the dignity of a people who stood in the forefront of Europe when it was built; of a people who enjoyed a remarkable degree of political representation, and knew how to exercise it with manly independence. It is eloquent of a time when chivalry and commerce went hand in hand together, and architecture sprang from the soul, and not merely from the pockets, of a people. "The admiration of foreigners and the honour of Barcelona," it deserves, with the mighty cathedral and a few other notable old buildings, all the love and the attention its people can bestow upon it.

Upon the day of my visit the greater part of it was under repair. The Court of Oranges lay under the litter of the workmen; most of the great rooms were under their scaffolding, and the beautiful little chapel of St. George, with its damascened front, was closed. But those which were shown me, and which were still in use, presented an appearance of stately and ceremonial magnificence. In one, as I entered, a number of young conscripts taken from every class of the community, were being measured for their fitness for war. At a high table a council or committee of military officers was seated. From the domed window above, the light came streaming in through coloured panes. The hangings were of crimson damask. Though many persons were present, there was scarcely a murmur, and the proceedings were stamped with an unconscious pride, as of the Spain of bygone days. In the adjoining hall, the Salon del Tribunal, there was no occupant. The hangings and the furniture were of even richer effect, while portraits of the King of Spain, Alfonso XIII., and a vast canvas by Fortuny, depicting in his earlier style the victory of Marshal Prim over the Moors at Tetuan, hung upon the walls. One could see in these royal portraits the gradual passing of the fragile child holding by his mother's skirt—the hope of Spain—into the callow youth, and so into manhood, as the debonair Alfonso of our day. They cover a critical period in the history of this ancient and noble people, and one is fain to believe that they mark a new era in the national fortunes.

The Casa Consistoral opposite includes a noble hall, the Salon de Ciento, with portraits of Ramon Berenger and

Muntaner and other great worthies of the Catalan race, ending with Verdaguer, the flower of their literary renaissance. The front of this old building, which has played so notable a part in the civic history of Barcelona, has been overlaid with a Palladian façade, but the rich old Gothic character of the house may be gauged from its outlook on a side-street.

In the old Viceregal palace of the Kings of Aragon there are superb archives, beginning with the times of Wilfred the Hairy, Count of Barcelona in the year 877. A genealogical tree upon the walls traces the descent of the Aragonese Kings from him, and so from the Gothic Counts of Ria, that little village in the French Pyrenees. The archives are arranged in perfect order, inscribed on vellum, or, as in the reign of James the Conqueror, on Arab paper which formed part of the spoils of his victories over the Moors. There are Arab documents also, and countless memorials of that heroic age. In these quiet rooms one forgets that Barcelona is a clamorous modern city. But its history is more ancient than even these memorials might suggest. Two grim old towers in its bustling streets were built here in days when Rome was triumphant; and hidden away in the *patio* of a modern house, now occupied by the Catalan Tourist Society, there are three superb Roman pillars which lift their Corinthian capitals to the sky, like prisoners in restraint. They stand where they have always stood since some Roman built them all those long centuries ago; and one wonders at the indifference of the people of Barcelona, who leave them thus, ignobly hidden by irrelevant walls and obscure surroundings.

But it is the Cathedral which, by its magnificence and old Spanish grandeur, dwarfs everything else in Barcelona. Here, if anywhere, is the soul of this strident city—a reminder that under the cosmopolitan surface of its life there still lives the stern and peculiar fibre of an Iberian people. Outside the tramcars clang and rattle, the shop windows glitter, and the roaring crowd goes by on its business, its pleasure, and its politics; flinging its bombs, shouting itself hoarse with republican passion, laughing down the Rambla where the flower-stalls fling their fragrance into the air.

A HAMLET IN THE VALLEY (*page* 251)

RIVER ARAVO, LOOKING TOWARDS CAROL (*page* 240)

But inside, here, within these grey and sombre walls that have witnessed every phase in the life of this Catalan city, since Count Ramon Berenger laid their foundations nine centuries ago, there is silence and majesty and a profound impression, as of Philip II. at prayer, and of such tragic and pitiless devotion as made the Spanish Inquisition the terrible thing it was. Manchester and Liverpool outside, if you like, but in here the heart of Spain, beating as of old, and a Cathedral reckoned to be one of the grandest of its kind.

In the crypt lie the ashes of St. Eularia, whose memory still lives after seventeen hundred years in the mystery plays of the Catalan peasantry; in an urn near the sacristy rests what may still survive of the Count Ramon Berenger; from the organ hangs the Saracen's head, symbolic of the conflict of Islam with Christianity; in the choir are displayed the arms of those Knights of the Golden Fleece who were present here when Charles V. held a Chapter of that noble Order in 1519; in a chapel there hangs the crucifix carried at the prow of Don Juan's flagship at the Battle of Lepanto; and an old sarcophagus holds the dust of Ramon de Penafort, the Catalan saint, while another adjoining it perpetuates the memory of a King's fool! The Chapel of Santa Lucia marks the oldest part of the cathedral; as the west front, added but recently, testifies to modern adornments.

The Cloisters are as lightsome and charming as the cathedral is dark and magnificent. Here fountains play in the sunlight, and slender palms display their beauty under a blue sky. It is as though the architect, brooding over his mighty creation, turned for an hour's relaxation down the Rambla, with its flowers, and its women with their bright glancing eyes, and its sensuous appeal to life.

There are many other old churches and cloisters and monasteries in Barcelona, which enshrine memories of its past; some of which were here as far back as the days of Al Mansur, when the muezzin called the faithful to prayer in the heart of the city; but these are almost lost in the crush of its modern buildings. The scene, as one looks down upon it from the Tibidabo, is frankly one of a commercial and manufacturing city; beautiful at night with its countless lights, its indescribable animation as of a twinkling host, but

by daylight, a Manchester or a Marseilles. Above this swarming populace, astir with the ferment of revolution and ever upon the edge of outbreak, soars the grim fortress of Mont Juich, holding their passions down with an iron hand. In other countries, in our own Empire, such power lies, as a rule, with the most advanced section of the nation; in Barcelona the position is reversed. Here the most modern, the most industrious, the most wealthy and eager of the people of Spain, are dominated by the old and the retrograde, and a fury sweeps through them whenever they have time to think of it. Hence the bombs and the revolutions which punctuate the life of their city. The personality of King Alfonso has done more, perhaps, to conciliate the restless hate of Barcelona, the characteristic turbulence of the Catalan, always bent on liberty and freedom, than any other force at present at work in Spain; and even as a passing traveller one is struck with the change that has come about in this respect in the past few years.

For the rest, Barcelona, though she be in the van of Spain, retains her Spanish characteristics. She has the Southern heritage, which makes her annoying to people of Northern blood; as India was to Baber, fresh from the streams and the meadows of his native land. She remains a city of flies and mosquitoes; of summer dust and glare; of large promises and casual performance; of slatternly unpunctual ways; of surface magnificence and an abiding squalor; of the life that is lived in public at the expense of that which is lived by a man in the privacy of his own home. Its people go to bed late, and you must expect to be kept awake by hilarity, by banging on doors, by the jarring of locks that do not fit, by cabmen coughing and spitting with an Oriental exuberance, by unseasonable music and the endless adieux of enamoured youth. There are smooth boulevards where your rubber tyres slide pleasantly along between rows of sumptuous if over-decorated houses; but you speedily pass from them to the tyranny of the cobbled street, with its harsh, exasperating surface. In the Plaza Catalunya, which looks so bright and emotional at night, with its shining globes and shadowy palms; you are oppressed by day with its dry and sultry air as of a desert-holding, with its untidy hollows scooped about

each tree to hold such water as can be stored in a thirsty land; you miss (unreasonably enough) the soft turf and gentler air of a Northern playground.

There are cafés by the hundred, with their hard marble tables, their silvered spheres, their clientele innumerable of people who sit here and smoke and drink and pass away the time till midnight, as though they had no homes to go to. The life is, indeed, the typical life of the Latin world; yet ever and anon there blows through it a wind as of Islam and the East. These things are indescribable. A seat at the corner of the Plaza Catalunya will tell one more of Barcelona than many books.

Here, as I linger amidst the unceasing clang and grind of tramcars, the hoot of the motor, the piping music of a fiddle, the hoof-beats, the footsteps, Barcelona reveals herself. The crowd is like any other Southern crowd—straw hats, bowlers, cheap clothes, pasty faces, black hair, the women plain and worn with the city life. There are policemen in red coats and helmets, reminiscent, in a far-off way, of the London bobby. Such differences as there are you will find to be significant. There are the sellers of lottery tickets, a profession to which a great many people in Barcelona seem to belong—now a pretty town girl with seductive eyes, and now a legless cripple in a box which he propels himself, beaming all over his kind and cheery face. There are all the customary people who make a living in the streets of a city: the seller of penny toys; the newsvendor; the bootblack; the post-card youth with a seedy air and a draggled cigarette at his lips; the old man with his case of spectacles suspended round his neck; the sailor with a monkey and a canary; the street musicians, blind and wooden-legged and weary, ministering sadly to the pleasure of life. For it is only in great cities that the broken and the fallen, and those who are driven by despair, are sucked into the winepresses of joy. And then there is the indignity of it all. In a little village even the humble are clothed with quietness and a certain self-respect; but here the fat men and the aging women hustle and run panting after the crowded trams, and are turned away with mortification, or sit blown with effort under the eyes of the callous. In his little village

a man is still a human being, with friends and a soul of his own; but here he is a unit, engulfed in the whirling deeps of the city.

Yet even in Barcelona, as in haughty Madrid, the country with its freshness and simplicity finds entrance. Through the crowded streets and past the glittering shops a shepherd passes with his flock; the milk-seller with his herd of she-asses goes pattering down the Rambla; a Catalan girl strolls up to a fountain with her two-mouthed *porro*, and lets the water pour between her open lips as she did in her native village before she ever came to Barcelona. Beside the electric tram there still plies the little mule-drawn bus, and under the dazzling arcs which hide the moon the flower-seller displays her wealth of lilies and carnations.

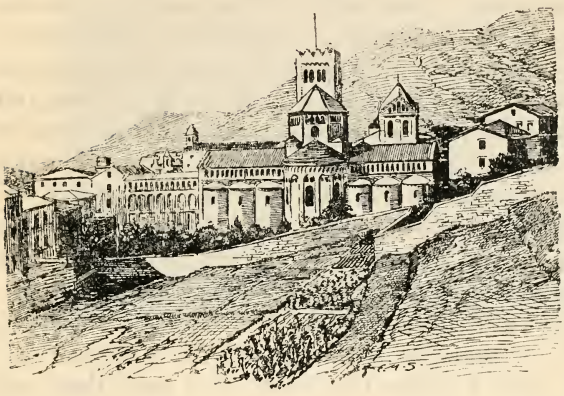
Not far off, under Columbus's Pillar, is the sea; but a commercial sea. Only at Venice did they know how to combine commerce with art and beauty. And though the sea has made Barcelona what she is, laying its wealth at her feet, her people turn their face away from her. Here is no Piazza of St. Mark. The tide of life rolls up the Rambla and across the Plaza, and the sea attracts no one.

The city has recently raised a lofty monument to the fame of Columbus, who was received here by Ferdinand and the gentle Isabella; but the bas-reliefs which grace its pedestal are already wearing away, and in the old palace of the Viceroys, where live the records of Aragon and Barcelona, no mention is to be found of the visit of the great explorer.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALLEY OF THE TER

June.



MONASTERY OF RIPOLL

WHEN I left Barcelona, I was happy to escape from this hot and noisy city. Soon we were out in the open, amongst the cornfields and the olive groves, and as we ascended a little valley into the hills a cool breeze came blowing down to ease the burden of the day. How good it was to be back amidst the simple joys of country life, the fields of waving corn, the little rivers running down amongst the hills, and the cloud-emblazoned sky!

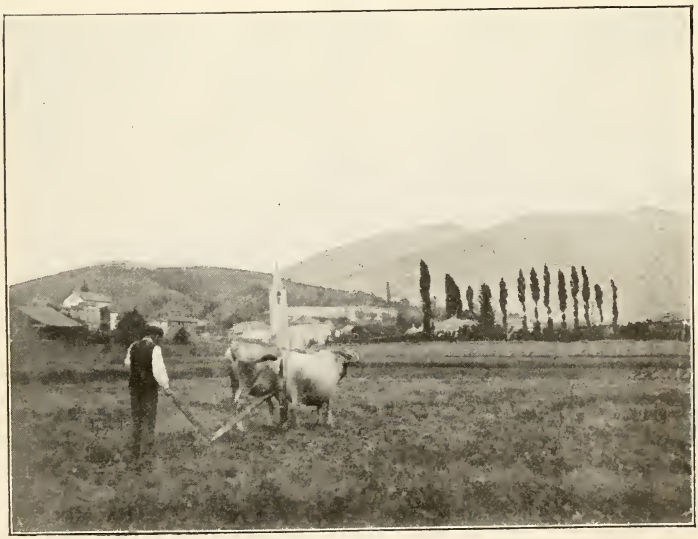
The hills about here are of the nature of Cordilleras, or escarpments deeply cut by water. The valley near Vich is a wide undulating plain, with these low hills on either hand, and the Pyrenees in the north. Vich has its old tower and its Bishop's palace, many castellated houses, and a thriving, prosperous air. It boasts a museum of local antiquities, founded by the late Bishop, and has witnessed many impressive scenes. The whole of this valley in which it stands was a storm-centre during the Carlist wars. As one leaves Vich, with its new railway-station, built in the Barcelona style, in honour of a royal visitor, the scenery becomes increasingly picturesque, and at the next station of Manlleu the train crosses the Ter. The church-tower, with its circle of white houses, looks cheerily over the cornfields and the poplar avenues, to the shapely clear-cut Cordilleras beyond.

The train itself is slow and primitive, the carriages narrow

and comfortless, the engines half a century old, and more worthy of a railway museum than of a modern highway. As I travelled slowly up this beautiful valley, which has known so much of civilization since the Roman first set his foot here, which lies within a few miles of the most prosperous and progressive of Spanish cities, I wondered at these inconsistencies; till I found enlightenment from my neighbour, an Englishman who owns a business concern in Barcelona, and escapes up this valley in summer to a small country-house in which his wife and children live. It was the simple old story of "graft," of the cankerworm of corruption, and a political Civil Service. Someone for instance, offered the civic authorities a life-saver for use on trams at a price of £8,000, while another asked £40,000 for something similar, and got his contract; for he was able to distribute £10,000 of the purchase-money in gifts to those in whose hands the selection lay. My informant had a little tale, also, of a road that was taken up that it might be laid down again, to some enterprising person's benefit. It seems strange that such things should persist amongst communities of intelligent and patriotic men, but the matter is mainly one of environment. It is as difficult for a public servant to be dishonest in one country as it is for him to be honest in another, and politics all over the world have a tendency to be unclean.

Leaving the wide pictured plain, the railway enters a narrow defile of the Ter, and the landscape loses in beauty, till near Ripoll, it opens out once more into a small and smiling valley of cornfields, with its monastery tower and houses clustering at the foot of the Pyrenean snows. This was evidently the type of abode most favoured by the old Gothic Counts, who seemed to love a little open mountain valley, with a narrow and difficult access to it from the plain. Secure in these strongholds from sudden attack, they had yet about them the means of a comfortable existence, and as time went on they extended their authority over the mountains and the adjoining valleys. The general character of the Vale of Ripoll is very similar to that of Vernet; but the Spanish touch is revealed in the heavy unmetalled road, over which one is carried amidst clouds of suffocating dust or a sea of mud, according to the state of the weather.

JUNE IN THE CERDAGNE



PLOUGHING IN THE CERDAGNE

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Nevertheless, in the village itself there are houses, built by Barcelona architects, with elegant—perhaps too elegant—adornments. The signboards displayed over some of the shops show traces of the New Art, and inside there are far more English goods than one would find in a considerable French town.

As we approached Ripoll, a Spaniard, who spoke to me in distressing French, gave me to understand that I should find there a countryman of mine by the name of Wilson, who had lived there for many years, and was apparently of an unusual type, as he had made his home very near the abbey, which was his main preoccupation. My fancy, which responds, perhaps too readily, to the bright sun and warmth of these Southern lands, pictured some unusual and eccentric countryman, who, scorning the money-seeking proclivities of Barcelona, had elected to live in this far-withdrawn valley, drawn to it by the fame of Count Wilfred's abbey. And as he appeared, from my informant's halting French, to be a gentleman of leisure and independent means, I found myself already, by a little cheerful anticipation, seated with him in his comfortable library, enjoying such a talk as does not commonly fall to a foreign traveller off the beaten track. I took an early opportunity, therefore, of presenting myself at the door of my eccentric countryman.

The house, an old one, looked promising, with its courtyard and overhanging roses, just such a one, I thought, as a man of taste might select ; and my expectations were sustained on being shown into an elegant parlour, which showed traces of comfort and of a leisured occupant. But I soon found that I had come to the wrong flat. Mr. Wilson, it seemed, lived higher up, and the maid with a sorrowful gesture, laying her head upon her hand as on a pillow, implied that the poor gentleman was far from well. I thought that at any rate I might be of some comfort to a countryman in distress. I mounted the stair, therefore, and found his door, with its brass plate bearing the inscription—

"The Rev. Joseph Wilson."

A very old and furtive dame opened to my knock, looking herself as one who had borne the storms of life. Yes, she said,

I might come in, but the Reverend was sorely afflicted. I was ushered into the presence of an ancient priest, who sat alone in a small armchair, in a small room, at a small bare table under a little window, bowed down with age and sickness. He could scarcely speak; he had forgotten nearly all his English; his accent had become foreign; his memory was at its last ebb. For months he had been seriously ill, and here he sat alone, the spark of life still burning within his dejected frame, the very image of loneliness and old age in exile.

We had some talk, with much halting and many painful interludes, and he was glad to see someone fresh from a country he had left, Heaven knows how long ago. He begged me to come again. I went out at last, feeling that I had opened a lamentable page in the book of life.

The Monastery of Ripoll, so famous in the annals of Catalonia and its royal house, confronted me across the sunlit square. I was fain to enter in, for it was the main object of my visit. Constructed in the years 1026-1032, it replaced an old sanctuary of Our Lady which had been destroyed by the Moors some 300 years earlier and had been rebuilt by the Carolingians. In 827 an ambitious Goth named Aizon betrayed Vich and Ripoll to the Arabs, and it was not till nearly fifty years later that Wilfred le Velu, Sovereign Count of Barcelona, finally drove out the Mussulman from the Valley of the Ter, and restored the old basilica. Eventually, in 1032, Oliba, Bishop of Vich, a man of princely blood, constructed the present edifice. He was assisted at the consecration by the Bishops of Barcelona, Albi, Carcassonne, and Elne, and a great host of Visigothic lords and barons, including Raymond Berenger, Count of Barcelona, and Wilfred, Count of the Cerdagne. Passing through many vicissitudes, it was only just saved from complete ruin, and restored to its present condition, by the Bishop of Vich in 1893. It remains, in spite of time and disaster, one of the most perfect surviving specimens of the romanesque architecture of the eleventh century.

Its superb portal would alone give it distinction; while within it the tombs of Count Wilfred and his infant son; of the Abbot Oliba; of Bernard Taillefer, Count of Besalu and

Olot, who died swimming his horse across the Rhone; of Raymond Berenger III., Count of Barcelona, King of Aragon, and Duke of Provence; make the history of the race very real and vital to anyone who has but read of these names in the cold print of some little-known volume. Here is the cradle of the Bourbons, the high-altar of the Catalans; and the people, in spite of their radical tendencies and of the modern revolutionary spirit of Barcelona, are proud of this survival from their past. Under these stones lives the spirit of their bygone chivalry, and in the knightly effigy in stone of Count Raymond Berenger, galloping on his armoured horse—a fine piece of sculpture—one is brought face to face with the proud sentiment of those long-past days.

Yet it is a cold and sad interior, and as one passes out from it over the marble gravestone of a Bishop of Vich, with its almost despairing legend, "O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded," one is forced to pause and reflect on the instability of human greatness. For it sounds an almost hopeless cry in the midst of this place, where the dead lie solitary and forgotten.

The most beautiful portion of this monastery church is its carved stone front, like a Roman triumphal arch. It is a rich page that has survived from the life and sentiment of nine hundred years ago, when men's hearts were still warm with the emotion of a Millennium that had gone by without catastrophe. Here is a "Christ in Majesty" enthroned amidst cherubims, and supported by the four Evangelists, with their apocalyptic emblems, of the angel, the eagle, the lion, and the bull. The long frieze extends from end to end, crowded with figures of the twenty-four old men of the Apocalypse, the whole of it a picture of Heaven and the future of the Church. The three lines of frieze below represent in feudal imagery scenes from the Old Testament: the crossing of the Red Sea, the manna and the quails in the desert, the Israelites demanding water from Moses, and the striking of the rock—episodes in that marvellous exodus whose romantic character has always appealed to men. Episodes from the lives of Elias and Solomon and David complete this series on both sides of the great central arch. Kings, knights, squires, monks, and musicians, form in single figures the next series,

and below these, somewhat mutilated now, are bold figures of lions and centaurs, and of an armed warrior standing over a vanquished lion; in which are symbolized respectively the triumph of Passion over Reason and of Reason over Passion. Lowest of all are medallions depicting the punishment of Vice and the reward of Virtue.

In the midst of these crowded friezes springs the richly decorated arch, with its panels of the twelve months of the year, a picture of rural life and of the customs, implements and arms, of the Catalans of the eleventh century. The whole of this wonderful façade is profoundly interesting, for it was the work of men who sought their inspiration in the vivid life and action of their times, and their models in the handiwork of Nature about them. The episodes are Biblical; but the character of the scenes is purely mediæval, a glowing page from the feudal period.

A side-door takes one from this storied porch into the cloisters, which date from a somewhat later time. Begun at the close of the twelfth century, it was not till 200 years later that they were completed by the illustrious Raymond des Catllar, Abbot of Ripoll and Bishop of Elne and Gerona. The two stories of which they are composed are thus of different epochs, but all are of remarkable perfection of detail. Here one feels a higher culture prevailed than in the Roussillon, a loftier ideal; and the skill of the workmen reached a finer level. They sought their inspiration in a direct appeal to Nature, and the 252 capitals which support the arches of the cloisters are an astonishing record in stone of the flowers and fruits, the history and the customs, of the land. They are perfect in detail, and differ one from the other. Here, also, one sees the arms of the Counts of Barcelona, not those of Aragon or Spain; and the people point proudly to these distinctive emblems of their nationality. Ripoll is in fact, and above all else, a Catalan sanctuary, and its old-world beauty is enhanced, for one who visits it to-day, by the green hill of San Bartolomeo, which rises high above it, with its terraced cornfields blowing in the wind. Nature and art, the storied past and the living present, meet in these noble cloisters.

Such is the Ripoll of the past, the far-famed Monasterio. But Ripoll is also a town abounding in present-day activities. The twin waters of the Fresser and the Ter, which give it so much of beauty and animation, have been harnessed by enterprising persons from Barcelona, and made to supply motive power to thread-mills and other industrial machinery. One of these I visited in the company of Lieutenant M——, of the corps of Carabineros, whose sense of hospitality led him to show me all the sights of the little town. It was a fascinating process we looked upon, that which converts the raw cotton brought here from tropical lands, by cleansing and continuous compression, into the fine resisting thread, like the processes which turn soft races into great ones. One noticed how all these revolving spindles, some of which moved so slowly as almost to be stationary, while others made 12,000 revolutions a minute, all contributed to the necessary end. How, also, the little human touch was needed, the slight hand of the pretty factory girl, to complete the labour of the toiling machines. It was all a wonderful triumph of human foresight and co-ordination; every step, as in Nature, from the revolving bands to the mercerizing of the cotton to make it look like silk, being preordained. The machines were English, and as a final touch the reels of silky thread were marked in English yards; since people like to buy English goods, and therefore this imitation and pretence are necessary. Here was a genuine tribute, and an illustration by the way, of the nibbling that is going on, all over the world, at the mighty trade of England. My friend the Lieutenant grimly surveyed the scene, and, as he is a man of character, I present him to the reader.

It is the function of Lieutenant M—— to repress the contraband trade of the frontier, a task which calls for some hardihood and determination. I asked him, when we first met, if he were a Catalan.

"No, sir," he replied, "I am of Castile;" and he said it with a rise in his voice and a visible pride.

His manner is English, and therefore entirely different to that of France. He has a sort of defiant stare, and is free

from mechanical courtesies. He does not raise his hat; he touches it. A bow must always come with difficulty to his unbending figure. He looks everyone he has to do with, boldly in the face, and seems to take respect for granted. He is a man, for his station, of unusual intellect and comprehension. His conversation is wide-reaching. He claims descent from Pizarro, and though he comes from Salamanca, his grandmother was of the Estremadura and a direct descendant of the Conquistador. One feels at once, on meeting him, that he is a man of harder and sterner blood than the commercial gentlemen in whose society he passes his time. For the Catalans, with all their pride of modernity and social progress, he has but a limited respect. Facing the inn at Ripoll there is an elegant mansion with a coat of arms emblazoned on its upper story, and a grocer's shop on its ground floor. It belongs to a Catalan Marquis. My Castilian friend rejoices when I comment upon this. "How often have I reflected," he says triumphantly, "on this very house, as symbolical of the Catalan spirit! In Castile a Noble is a Noble, but here—— !"

We approach another house, which stands a little apart from the town.

"It is your house," he says, pointing to it with his hand.

I think that I have misunderstood him, but on entering I find that it is where he lives.

"Ah, Senhor," I exclaim, "I see that it is your house."

"My house," he gravely replies, "and Yours—entirely at your disposition."

The traditional words fall splendidly from him, enhanced by his plain and unadorned manner.

This man paints and draws; he makes excellent black-and-white sketches, and has illustrated a work on the history of his corps. He has photographs showing a neighbouring church-tower defended by the Carabineros in the last Carlist war, and the cemetery into which they were taken and shot. He insists on accompanying me to various places in the town where I have business. His pride of hospitality requires this. He stands here in this little commercial town for the Castilian tradition. In his company one has the fellowship of a gentleman.

FORDING THE SHALLOWS

UR, FROM THE SPANISH BORDER STONE (*page* 253)

"Do not think, Senhor," he says, with a firm look, "that Spain is a dead country. *She lives*, and her future is bright."

In this man's manner there is no touch of the South, no trace, even, of the refinement, too fine-drawn perhaps, of the Frenchman. He has no pose, and one enjoys a certain ease in his company. What he says he means, and what he thinks he is apt to convey without finesse.

There is an excellent Spanish inn at Ripoll, well placed on the banks of the Ter, and the proprietor is a worthy fellow and an honest man. He waits at the table himself, taking a personal interest in his guests, his napkin over his shoulder; and he has a laugh and a story, but is withal a grave and solid man of firm character and dignity. For lunch he gave us *hors d'œuvres*, including some perfect lettuce of a quality almost unobtainable in England, soup, boiled meat, a dish of vegetables, sausages and fried potatoes, fresh trout from the river outside the inn, eggs, kidneys, strawberries and oranges (which the Spaniards take together), canned peaches, rusks, good country wine followed by a glass of *rancio*, and excellent bread. All this was simply and well cooked, and served with a lavish hand. For such entertainment, a good bed, and a great deal of friendly attention, I was charged 8 pesetas a day, and I have no doubt the Spanish company at the inn paid considerably less.

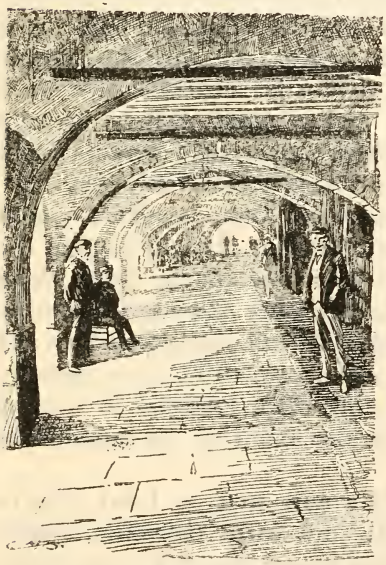
My room opened on a deep south veranda which caught the full light of the sun, a very pleasant place in any but the warmest weather. Sixty feet below me ran the Ter, a thing of life and animation. Its farther bank displayed a narrow and vivid grassy border, lined with tall poplars and an old wall. Just opposite a lane came down to the river, passing under a feudal tower; and this road, followed in bygone days by armed men, was now the haunt of the laundresses of Ripoll.

All is grist to the traveller's mill, and as I sat here in the bright morning sunlight, my early breakfast spread before me on a table, I looked before me with interest and expectation. I was soon rewarded, for presently I saw a little laundress come swaying gracefully down the narrow path till she reached the grassy rim of the river. Selecting

a place, she dropped her box of linen, and stood for a few seconds in that pose which is peculiar to women, both hands uplifted to adjust her hair. Her slight skilled fingers did their work, while her statuesque figure remained unmoved and perfect. An old black horse and a little donkey grazed peacefully beside her, and the tall poplars were gravely imaged in the moving waters. Along the bridges at both ends the muleteers passed to the music of soft clanging bells; the big hill behind her, terraced with corn to its summit, glowed green and violet in the summer sun. The old chapel of San Bartolomeo shone like a distant vision. Then, her own personal task accomplished, her hands fell to her side, and the goddess became merged in the busy laundress of Ripoll.

CHAPTER V

RIBAS



GERONA

From Ripoll the traveller who has come up by train from Barcelona may return to that centre of life and fashion, and so eventually get back to France by train; but if of a more venturesome mind, he may cross the high intervening mountains by road, and enjoy the sensation of a coach and six. I determined to take the latter course, and as the box-seat was a matter of some importance, I presented myself at the railway-station, whence the coach starts, half an hour before the arrival of the train from Barcelona, and waited patiently, as is proper in Spain. The train of course was late; but

the sun shone brightly above after a night of tempest, and, instead of arriving in the train after the manner of the important foreign traveller, I felt like a member of the family waiting for its arrival. Outside the station the lumbering old "dilly" was drawn up, with six horses to it, and I had leisure to examine its structure. Here was an ancient vehicle, well fitted to revive the actualities of old-world travel as distinct from the rosy idealism of our "Christmas Numbers." It was heavy and strong, and splashed with mud—a creature of the road. The Driver and the Guard sat in front, and there was room between them for a third passenger—myself. Behind us there was the *coupé*, with three seats, and these had the advantage of being sheltered in bad weather, with five windows to let in the air when it was fine. Behind the *coupé* was the body of the vehicle, with transverse seats for ten persons. Under the roof there was room for an indefinite number of travellers and a large quantity of baggage.

The train presently came in, the passengers jumped out, the *tartanes* carrying away all who were alighting at Ripoll or proceeding only as far as Ribas. The "dilly" was a long time getting under way. At last the driver and the guard took their seats, the horses plunged forward three abreast, and the air resounded to the crack of the driver's whip, the sound of his raucous voice, and the music of half a hundred bells. It was a brisk and enlivening start, but the road was amazingly bad, and the light springless *tartanes* went bounding over it like small boats in a choppy sea, rattling the very bones of all who rode within. The "dilly," by reason of its weight and powerful springs, was less at the mercy of the road, yet there were moments when it swayed from side to side like a ship in distress. We clattered through the market-place and up the narrow streets, splashing everyone with mud, and the sudden cracking of the driver's whip brought a shrinking to many a pretty face on the narrow kerb. We passed under many houses and villas got up in the best Barcelona manner, with all sorts of imposing and artistic attractions of the latest type. Yet from such magnificence to the mediæval and disreputable road was but a yard. Endurance, it would seem, is the first essential to

life in Spain, and the Patience which waits for what is promised for—To-morrow.

The road lay up the Valley of the Fresser River, whose green waters came foaming and splashing down from their Pyrenean heights. By the side of the road there glided by a splendid canal, deep and wide enough to float a good-sized canoe, and as smooth and easy as the road was rough. At intervals it was carried over long arches and aqueducts, which added to the picturesque character of the way. A brilliant sun dappled the road with light, and for a mile or two we ran under the over-arching planes. Then this uniformity suddenly ceased with a Spanish inconsequence, and the unexpected, the varied, and the irregular, took its place.

But whatever else this road was, it was picturesque. We passed the mules carrying timber down from the mountains, and we saw them, with their customary wariness, shrink away at the right moment from the "dilly," which nearly filled the road. They followed each other in a long single file, no one apparently in charge, their red and yellow trappings glowing in the sun. We came upon an old-world bridge, like those you see in China, with a huge humpback, and a narrow way over it, only wide enough for pack animals. We saw mills and factories, and waterfalls tumbling in foam down the stony walls of the defile. Tall poplars in a line lent at intervals their invariable distinction to the landscape. Some of the mountain-slopes were as richly wooded as an Exmoor coombe ; in one place the stratified rocks had been moulded by some earth-strain into a perfect semicircle ; in the distance up the valley there were the big blue mountains splashed and streaked with snow. Near Ribas there were three big hotels, and a country-house, whose marshalled poplars laden with white Banksia roses, and rich plantations of firs and other ornamental trees, spoke of someone's wealth at Barcelona. At Ribas the valley opened, leaving space for this little town at the foot of the high mountains.

Passing by all these scenes at a good spanking pace, bells ringing, whip cracking, and cigarette endlessly alight between the driver's lips, we finally came to a stop opposite the Fonda Catalunya, one of several inns which share this

privilege in rotation through the week, and here I descended to find a lodging. The old flea-bitten grey in the shafts was blue with sweat, and the ears of the other horses hung down with the toil of the journey. They were unharnessed and led away, and everyone alighted for the midday meal.

Very pleasant it was, after this gratifying ceremony was over, to sit outside the inn on a bench and take one's coffee, and a quiet part in the easy-going life of the little town. It was a Sunday, and the girls were all nicely dressed for the evening dance, and nobody seemed to have any other purpose than to take the good things of life good-humouredly—a blessed environment. Three members of the Guardia Civile, who looked all that one might expect from the pages of Henry Seton Merriman, finishing their midday halt at the Fonda Catalunya, went away with their loaded rifles to some place up the valley. An old Catalan servant in brown velvet and a purple barretina, which he wore like a mortar-board, sat outside the café taking the comforting sun. A flock of sheep came down the street, driven by another such as he, with a red cap and a red band round his waist, making a bright splash of colour between the houses. It was nothing very wonderful; and yet of such is the kingdom of the road.

The life that is lived here in such outlying places is antique and flavoured, without being sordid or uncomfortable. My bedroom was as scrupulously clean as a hospital ward, and a positive advance, in fine weather at least, on ordinary English lodgings. The bed was soft and comfortable, with even a touch of splendour. There was not a superfluous hanging or anything to harbour dust. I had a balcony which looked across the street, to a green hill, and the village church-tower, and the mountains beyond. In the winter when Ribas is white with snow, these inns must be comfortless indeed, for fireplaces are infrequent, and carpets are apparently unknown; but in summer they are good, and they are cheap—5 pesetas a day.

CHAPTER VI

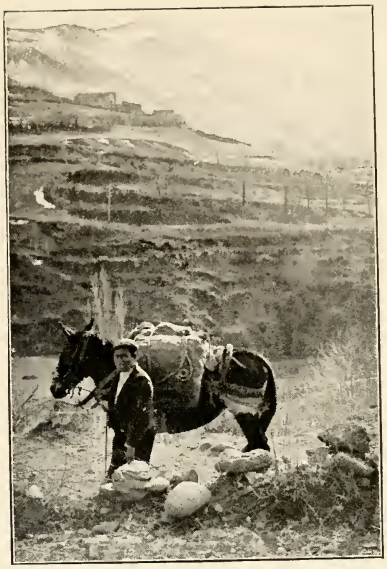
OVER THE COL DE TOSAS

COACH ON THE COL DE TOSAS

I LEFT Ribas the next day at noon, the sky very blue overhead and bright with sunshine and white luminous clouds, after a morning of rain. There was promise of a fine crossing over the lofty Col. Our way lay along the banks of the Rigart, which flowed far down in the depths of the valley, through velvet meadows and lines of stately poplars — the cypresses of the North. On all sides of us rose the lofty mountains, clothed in dark firs, and bare as to their summits, where the snow lies for nine months of the year. There were green wind-swept cornfields upon their terraced flanks, and broom, broom everywhere, glowing like fire upon the barren spaces. The road, ever ascending, forced its way through the white marble rocks, and the powerful horses sweated and strained under their heavy freight. They looked the very image of strength and vitality, but the road kills them in five years; while the frail women and the tender children who ride behind, outlast them by fifty, even a hundred years.

One is reminded here of travel in the Himalaya, but instead of the weedy, maimed, and often bleeding cattle, and the lithe, slight, picturesque Oriental driver, there are these splendid horses, and the hard unromantic Catalan, with his searching whip and loud thwacking voice—a man of iron.

This is a route of great mountain spaces and clean-cut sky-lines and swooning clouds. Against the far-flung land-



TRAVEL IN THE MOUNTAINS (*page* 268)

MULES (*page* 268)

scape one sees the peasant creeping behind his steers upon the edge of a narrow field; upon the road one meets the heavy *carro* rumbling with pealing bells, behind its five mules in a line; the light *tartane*, with its tandem of breedy horses travelling fast; the Guardia Civile, with their loaded muskets and white linen hats; the flocks of bleating sheep white upon the mountain-sides, whose lofty summits are clean as the flanks of a new-clipped hunter.

But this is a summer impression. The *Cochero*, who has been on the road fifteen years, has another tale to tell. In winter, he says, the snow lies heavy on the Col. Often even then the weather is bright and warm, but there are tragic intervals when all is changed, and the very Devil himself seems to lodge in the mountains, and in the tempests that blow here with unrestricted fury. The diligence, true to its name, plies through it all, except when absolutely stopped by the driving snow. The *Cochero* does his stage of fifteen miles; the Conductor goes the whole way from Ripoll to Puigcerda. They are a rough breed, but rough as they seem, they are polished by comparison with the rude people who live in some of the isolated farmhouses of the valley. Hearty and frank, the *Cochero* by whom I sat was a good specimen of a man. Though a Spaniard by nationality, he had a profound contempt for Spanish slackness. "*Ces Espagnols*," he said, pointing to the neglected road, "*sont les cochons pour faire des travaux*." He spoke as one who had driven his coach and six across it for fifteen years. His salary, he told me, was $4\frac{1}{2}$ pesetas a day, but it was hardly won. Wet or fine, feast-day or holiday, his day's task has to be performed; and no allowance is made for illness, nor is there any scope for idling while on the box. Hand and voice and eye are intensely at work from the moment he takes the reins between his masterful fingers at Ribas till he flings them down upon the backs of his sweating horses at La Molina.

As we climbed there was thunder in the air, but the landscape spread far and wide about us; pretty mountain-streams came murmuring down through the broom and the firs, and flocks of white sheep grazed peacefully upon the slopes. At La Cantina, an auberge by the wayside, we had come 20 kilometres from Ribas, and the coach waited while the passengers

partook of refreshments. We were now within three miles of the summit of the Col, but the storm which had been threatening broke upon us at last; the rain came down in purple sheets, streaked with fierce flashes of lightning; the thunder volleyed and reverberated, and the horses bent their heads mournfully under the blinding rain. Yet we continued to ascend till the sky above us shone blue again and the downs glowed in the fresh sunlight. The women in the coach began to sing, the *Cochero* cracked his whip with loud pistol-like reports, the bells rang, the horses plunged forward, and we made the Col de Tosas, 5,500 feet above the sea, in fine galloping style. As we reached the summit a great view burst upon us. At our feet lay a green alpine valley of meadows and dark fir-trees and running water, and beyond it a luminous sea of blue and silver, the upland world and snowy peaks of Andorra.

We drew up here with dramatic effect; and under the open heaven, with that sense of a spacious world which comes upon one on attaining a mountain-pass after a long climb up a restricted valley, we looked out upon the scene before us. I do not think that there was anyone in the coach who was not moved by its appealing beauty.

The driver now resumed his seat, and taking the ribbons firmly in his grasp, called out to the horses, and searched with his long whip their steaming flanks. It was steep going, downhill, and the great diligence with its twenty-five passengers plunged recklessly forward, the horses, in sight of their stables and driven by the loud voice and lashing whip of the *Cochero*, moving at full gallop. The road was none too wide, and it was rough in places where the newly-thrown metal had not yet been rolled; but we took its curves and its obstacles with superb precision, and apparently regardless of consequences; just to show for once what the *Cochero* could do in the way of handling a team.

Presently we drew up again, to let those who wished to do so descend and take the footpath down to La Molina, while the coach followed the long winding road; the sixth horse, who looked so fine a creature in the shafts, following humbly behind, a mournful and ridiculous object. As the coach went out of sight, I followed the path through the

golden broom and the fir-woods, and found myself alone in a world of alpine beauty. Here was one of those grand solitudes one finds in the heart of a mountain country, with no sound to break its infinite stillness but the haunting voice of the cuckoo and the low deep tolling of the cattle-bells. The green downs, which higher up are dark with fir-trees, descend to the turf-clad edge of the little river of Alp which gives this attractive valley its name. Here there were vast meadows white with narcissus, and streamlets playing round little islands golden with the blossoming kingcup.

The pathway led me to the farmhouse of La Molina, a massive and handsome building that must once have been owned by some nobler proprietor, but is now tenanted by a family of rude Catalans, who cater for the needs of travellers. These sordid folk are unworthy of their superb environment, and La Molina, at which I spent the night, is not to be recommended as an inn to the traveller who can push on to Puigcerda. Yet there must be times when even this place must seem a haven of rest to one descending, cold and storm-driven or out of provisions, from the mountains. To the *cocheros* and the carters and the muleteers it is a necessary place of call, for it is the only place at which a hot meal can be had on the road between Puigcerda and Ribas, a matter of thirty miles; and in winter its warm kitchen fire must be eagerly looked forward to by those who come through the snow on the Col de Tosas.

Once the whole of this beautiful valley belonged to the Abbey of Ripoll, or to the Kings and Nobles of Aragon; but it has long since fallen into these meaner hands, and the rough Catalans who occupy it know nothing of Madrid and royalty, and care less. It is true there is a post of Carabineros at La Molina, under a Castilian sergeant; but the Catalan is the most determined democrat in the world, and a change from the monarchy to a republic would for him be one only in name.

CHAPTER VII

FIVE MULES AND A "CARRO"

MULES AND "CARRO"

HAVING come so far by train and motor and six-horse coach, I resolved to complete my journey to Puigcerda in a *carro*, the humblest vehicle on the road. I hoped to leave La Molina in the first *carro* that came along in the morning, but I waited all day before one came proceeding in my direction. While I waited, the *tartanes* came bobbing up the road, *carros* bound for Ribas lumbered slowly up to the inn door, the great chain that bars this highway in testimony to its private ownership was constantly being unhooked and refastened on payment of a fee, carters and *cocheros* entered the inn for food and drink, dogs barked, pigeons cooed, and there was ever the murmur of running water and the sound of distant cow-bells. At last, after long waiting, my *carro* came, and I set out for Puigcerda.

It was five o'clock; the sun was shining, and we travelled slowly down the Valley of the Alp, with a patch of blue snow-topped mountain ever before us in the distance. This view gradually increased in beauty, yielding a wider and wider outlook on the snow-spangled heights of Andorra, until the whole wonderful Vale of the Cerdagne broke upon my vision, at a point where the towers of the great farmhouse of Torre de Riu rose up in the foreground; while beyond these lay the shining plain, level as the floor of the sea, with the long evening sunlight flooding its pictured surface.

Farther off swelled the cultivated downs, green shot with mauve, and of an amazing beauty, with villages dotted about at intervals; while above them spread the snowy masses in sweeping fields and glittering summits.

Reaching the open vale, the *carro* swung round, and there before me, superbly placed upon a height in the centre of the plain, rose the town of Puigcerda, with its high church-tower, its clustering houses, and dark foliage—a very prism of colour in the evening light. And this view held my gaze, always directly before me, under the awning of the *carro*, with the five mouse-coloured mules stepping daintily in the foreground. At 2 kilometres from the town I descended from the *carro*, from amidst the pile of somebody's household furniture and the bags of grain which had given me a seat, and looked about me with a sense of expansion. The whole valley was now within my compass, and at this darkling hour — for it was nearly eight o'clock, and the lights of Puigcerda were shining out against the dusk—it was wonderfully beautiful. Snow-storms were blowing upon some of the great mountains, while those which were nearer rose blue and clear against the sky. There, ahead of me, lay France but half an hour's journey away, and there, on my left, rose up the mighty bulwarks of Andorra; while, as I turned to look back upon the mountain-passes through which I had come, my eyes were seized with the noble majesty of outline, the Roman grandeur of the Sierra del Cadi, still glowing in the last after-light of sunset. Here, it seemed to me, was a true land of Canaan, with its rushing waters, its tall cornfields like a sea upon its floor, its orchards and long avenues of trees. Here was a world apart and beautiful, which has remained exclusive and unknown, unvisited by the pleasure hordes of Europe, and untouched by the fever of modern life.

The last fraction of my journey was a climb in the dark up the steep cobbled streets of Puigcerda, and I was glad when at length I made the friendly shelter of my hotel. The *carro* meanwhile pursued its slow unhurrying course, the five tired mules wagging their long ears, the driver in his blue smock walking patiently beside them, and the great lumbering vehicle searching out every rut and inequality in

the road with a marvellous precision. If I had to send an expert official to inspect a national highway in Spain, I should make him travel in a *carro*, and record every inequality on its surface as registered by his own person, for it is a machine wonderfully adapted for the purpose.

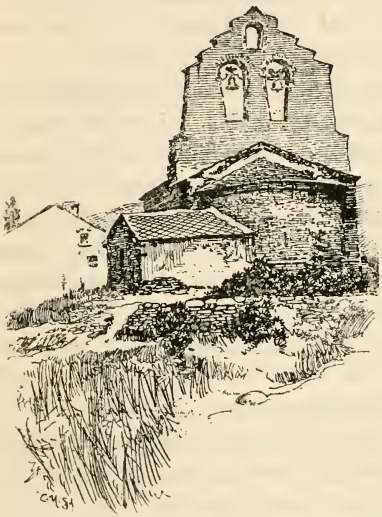
And yet there is a fascination even in this primitive mode of travel. All the patience and endurance of Spain are in the dry sinewy figure of the driver, all the tranquillity of a bygone century in the long vista of the five slow-stepping mules, and something of undefinable romance in the swaying shifting landscape, as one sees it from under the tent-like canvas of the roof; while within, surrounded by all the miscellaneous requirements of a simple community, one tastes once more the flavour of a pioneer existence. Stage-coaches, the auto-bus, the railway, all these are successive stages of the modern advance, but the *carro* is the ancient vehicle of the land, the rude heir of the ox-waggon in which the ancestors of these people descended upon the Roman world.

THE INN AT SOLDEU (*page* 271)

AT THE DOOR OF THE INN (*page* 271)

BOOK VII

THE VALE OF THE CERDAGNE



ST. LÉOCADIE, NEAR SAILLAGOUSE

THE 14th of June broke in Puigcerda in a blaze of sunlight, and the day is one that I look back upon as one of the most vivid of my life. My room looked out on a back street, upon an old grey wall, rough with the boulders left here by the great glacier of the Cerdagne ; but, except that it was luminous in the morning sunlight, it offered no promise of what was to come. About nine I went out into the Plaza Mayor, whose houses are upheld in old sixteenth-century style on granite posts, many of which are now askew. Under these a rough arcade runs round the square. In the centre is a marble statue of Cabrinetty, who defended the heroic and invincible town in the Carlist war of 1873-74. The streets are dirty, the houses rather tattered and neglected, the shops those of a small and dingy little provincial town. In spite of the warm sunlight, I felt disconsolate and chilled, for I had heard so much of Puigcerda. Before me rose the ex-noble building, now used by the Circulo Agricola Mercantil, which opens its doors to the

passing stranger. I entered, therefore, its rather sombre precincts, and mounted the stairway to the first floor, where evidently was a café, frowsy as a London tea-room at that early hour when the poor drudges who wait upon an economical public still have their hair in curl-papers, and are not yet finished scrubbing the floor. A seedy-looking waiter stood behind a bar, garnished with *apéritifs*, a coffee-urn and some picture post-cards. From this unpromising interior I stepped out through the glazed and coloured doors on to a terrace, commanding one of the most lovely views in the world.

The terrace itself was haughtily placed upon some old walls, which dropped down to the lower strata of the town, and it was worthy of a Prince. Charlemagne, if he ever came this way, can have asked for nothing more superb. The view embraced the whole of the Spanish Cerdagne, and the French Valley of Carol, which leads up under snowy heights past Andorra to Toulouse. But these words convey no idea of the perfection of the scene—of the green and vivid plain, patterned with fields and luxuriant trees, and as rich and soft as velvet; nor of the white villages gleaming about the foot-hills in a circle about the plain, upon sites unchanged since a thousand years; nor of the ring of impending mountains, blue and bare and forest-clad, and white with the still lingering snow; nor of the startling blue of the cloud-emblazoned sky; nor of the flaming acres red with poppies; nor, least of all, of the violet fields of vetch which were spread out with an amazing and wholly novel beauty upon the undulating downs. For neither words nor all the skill of brush and palette can depict the mysteries of Light in which all these, and a host of other details, were merged into one exquisite and perfect whole.

There are scenes, no doubt, as beautiful as this; one has known such emotions in a Swiss valley, upon the edge of Exmoor or the Quantock Hills, and in the vales of the county Wicklow; yet this little Spanish town upon its hill, so neglected and dirty, is perhaps more favoured than them all. Far as one can see there is yet no factory chimney, the smoke of no locomotive, the conglomeration of no aggressive and progressive town. It is a land which glows, in the face of its blue heaven, as freshly virginal

as it did a thousand years ago, and its backward peasantry have left no trace upon it but one of beauty. It is a far-remote and landlocked world, apart from all the great modern highways of life; and its villages doze in the sunlight, regardless, it would seem, of time and its incidents. One would never think, as one looks at it from here, that it can have had any history or taken any part in the movements of mankind. And yet, strangely enough, this secluded valley is one of the highways of Europe. It has known the compelling hand of Rome, the impetuous onsets of Islam, the answering wave of Christianity, as it rolled down under the banners of Charlemagne, and drove before it the insufferable hosts of the intruding Saracen. Here upon this shining plain have been fought from century to century the battles of France and Spain, and here two hundred years since our last battle was fought upon English soil, and later even than the last closing incidents of the Franco-Prussian War, these green fields have been stained with Spanish blood, and its soft rural peace has been broken by the thunder of the Carlist wars. In Puigcerda, *la heroica y siempre invicta villa*, these episodes are not forgotten; the heroic and ever-unconquered city lives upon her fame, and every citizen over fifty carries in his heart warm memories of her last siege and unyielding temper.

On the terrace of the club I met a member, a watch-maker by trade, who presently engaged me in conversation.

"Yes," he said, "it is a wonderful view—less fresh to me who live here than to you, yet of an unfailing attraction. Never a day of my life passes that I do not step out on to this terrace, and usually I pass an hour or two contemplating this beautiful scene. Even in winter the climate here is superb, scarcely a day without bright sunlight; and how often in midwinter I have had to retreat to the shelter of the coffee-room, from the hot sun!" He spoke with a Spanish gravity that glowed with restrained enthusiasm, and with Spanish hospitality, offered to walk with me through the town. We emerged without any marked transition, from the old nucleus of the town into the newer region of villas and the Lake of Puigcerda. This, though a small bit of artificial water, is singularly pure and bright in colour, a very play-

thing for the light. It is surrounded by trees and the snow-clad mountains are imaged in it. A lively canal, fresh from the Valley of Carol, pours its waters into this lake. Here is modern Puigcerda, with its luxurious villas, some of which display perfectly appointed parks and flower-beds and rich velvety turf. But here one might be in the suburbs of Lausanne, and local colour is entirely lacking.

My companion presently left me to attend to his business, and I moved away from these sophisticated joys, the outcome of somebody's wealth in Barcelona, to a clover-field which glowed before me. It was now three o'clock in the afternoon of a very perfect June day, and I might have been in England, but for the caressing warmth of the sun. Near me a man was mowing away with his gleaming scythe at the clover; farther off there were two teams of the stalwart dun-cattle of the valley ploughing amidst the furrows; while beyond these and all about me rose the swelling uplands, the emerald valleys with their tall poplars and embroidered meadows, and the snow-topped mountains under the wonderful blue sky, with its white rolling cumulus-clouds. It was a scene of rustic beauty and great peace.

Puigcerda is the natural capital of the valley, its provisioning centre; and to it there come, indiscriminately from France and Spain, the people from all the neighbouring villages to buy and to sell. I wished to see its weekly gathering, to hear the news, and to make some necessary inquiries about the road into Andorra. I therefore waited till market-day came round, to find the quiet old square galvanized by the presence of a great crowd of farming-men in black smocks and caps, and old market-women in sombre gowns. Half a century ago the men would have been clad in their red and purple *barretinos*, with red sashes round their waists, and the women would have worn lace caps; but to-day the advance of civilization has drawn the Cerdagne into its unpicturesque net, and there was scarcely a note of colour or individuality in the crowd. But there was the usual touching sight of live creatures brought in for sale for human consumption: rabbits lying ever so close in black baskets, their long ears laid flat, their sides

heaving, their young, like innocent babes, much less afraid, sitting up and glad of something to nibble at; ducklings with their soft velvety fluff; trussed fowls; and white dove-like pigeons with red-rimmed eyes—all here to be sacrificed to the ferocity of man. Yet how perfect after their kind! so much more beautiful, with their large eyes and delicate fur and painted wings, than these people who buy and sell and kill them. How can any compassionate heart accept such a sacrifice?

The Circulo Agricola Mercantil, true to its name, was full of these country folk; a noble mansion, once the home of the Des Catlars, it has now fallen into peasant hands. There is no people so republican as these, and it is a far cry from royal Madrid to this community of hard-bitten men who know no distinctions of rank or class.

After lunch (my neighbours at table—French peasantry—fed well on trout and quail and delicate lettuce and red wine, discussing the *voyant* colours of the ceiling and Arab influence on Spanish taste!) I walked down the hot flaming streets to the parish church, a long raking building with little pepper-pot skylights, a roof of coloured tiles, and a high octagonal tower. I entered, to find a dark and primitive interior, with a vague blue vaulting sown with stars, a large congregation on its knees, and bars of white light pouring down with a startling definition through the gloom of the church. These shafts of light fell in circular pools on the dark floor, and were so intense as to feel almost solid to the eye. Yet where they touched the silvery head of some old man, or enveloped in their effulgence a kneeling girl, they were as diaphanous as light itself. These effects, or tricks, of lighting are very simple and easily contrived, but they give a welcome touch of life to subdued harmonies, and these almost-too-solemn interiors. I went out by another door, through a magnificent arch of red marble, which by some process of extension had become enshrined within the building. Here upon the walls beside it hung two superb paintings on wood of the fourteenth century, depicting the martyrdom of St. John and a scene from the Apocalypse.

From the church I went over to the Casa Consistoral, or Townhall, which looked very fine in the bright morning

sunlight, with its heavy eaves supported by mediæval carvings, and its red and yellow standard with the arms of Puigcerda blowing in the breeze. Above the slated roof there is a singular figure, like a tattered Dante, which veers in the wind, and looks as if centuries had passed over its head. Within the building I found the industrious Town Clerk at work, although it was a holiday, and he very obligingly undertook to show me the archives.

We passed through the Council-chamber, which had a certain air about it, with its red padded doors, some portraits on the walls, a statuette of Cabrinetty, and his sword, a slight and delicate weapon, displayed upon a shield behind the President's chair, with the words "To Puigcerda." Then the Clerk turned the key of a side-door, and I prepared to enter a muniment-room, similar, if on a humbler scale, to that I had seen at Barcelona. But I found a little closet, and within a cheap deal cabinet these priceless archives, stored away like old waste paper, tied up with little bits of string, popped into cardboard boxes with coloured prints of Spanish beauties on them, once, doubtless, the joy of some little milliner's shop; while many more just lay curled up or folded across as things of no value at all. There were vellums heavy with the seals of the Kings of France and Spain, volumes of State papers with illuminated pages, and all kinds of beautifully-inscribed documents, brown with the hue of 1,100 years. One of these this Clerk fished out with his casual nimble fingers, unrolling before my eyes the signatures of the Counts Guifred and Sunifred, and of Oliba, Bishop of Ripoll. I stood before the cheap deal case, fascinated, holding the wonderful document in my hand, while the Clerk routed about for other treasure-trove. My first feeling was one of stupefaction, my second of indignation, and my third of covetousness, so that I refrained with difficulty from popping it into my pocket. Deeds of the ninth century, though inscribed with such historic names as these, were apparently small-beer to my obliging friend, who cheerfully consented to their being photographed, and busied himself with pins and other necessary instruments; while my mind ran on another document in Lisbon which could only be taken to

MULE TRACK, COL OF THE EMBALLIRA (*page* 277)

WAYSIDE CROSS NEAR ANDORRA-LA-VIEJA (*page* 277)

the photographers under an escort of five armed men, and then only after elaborate and stately formalities. But in Puigcerda these things are taken more lightly. On the ground floor, as one enters, there is a vaulted chamber, in which it appears these treasures are to be arranged, but *mañana*, not to-day; and documents which have had the tenacity to survive 1,100 years can be trusted to prolong their existence without too much fastidious care.

We were presently joined by Senhor Marti, and adjourned with him to the Council-table, there to examine at greater leisure these memorials of the past of Puigcerda. There were two copies of the Livre Vert, this being a manuscript copy on vellum made from the original documents in 1298, with capitals displaying the puig, or peak, and the fleur-de-lis, which are the arms of the heroic and unconquered city. One of these was an ordinance of James I. of Majorca, prescribing the costume to be worn by Jews, and instructing them at all times to wear the Hebrew's cap. There was a manuscript history of the town compiled in the sixteenth century by some industrious and forgotten secretary, and there were the papers relating to the Carlist war, and the letters of the Carlist commanders calling upon the town to surrender. These bore the arms of Spain and the seal of the Lieutenant-General commanding in Barcelona, and were in the name of the General (Marquis by grace of Don Carlos) at the head of the Carlist forces. There was a sheaf of congratulatory letters from the towns of Spain, from Cuba, and from other sympathizers all over the world.

Marti explained that the successes of the Carlists in the neighbouring districts led the Council to fortify the town in April, 1873, the old walls having fallen into decay. In September it was besieged for two or three days. In 1874 it was attacked in force, the siege lasting sixteen days. Seven Puigcerdans were killed, and many Carlists, amongst whom was a noble youth, an Italian Captain, upon whose body, as he lay dead in the little *plaza* near the Townhall, they found a lock of a girl's hair, with a tender message praying to the Saints for his safety amidst the dangers of war, and a letter from his rival in her affections, begging him to say which of them the girl loved, as the doubt and

uncertainty were more than he could bear. "He lay there," said Senhor Marti, rising and pointing from the window to the sunlit *plaza*, "and I have never seen a nobler specimen of manhood, as he lay there with a bullet through his throat."

It was easy to picture it all: the brave attack pushed nearly home through the breach in the grey walls below the Agricola Mercantil, the perfect landscape glowing beyond, from velvet fields to snowy mountain heights, the smoke and the noise of battle, and the adventurous lover stretched out there with his handsome face turned up to the sky, his destiny accomplished. What, one wonders, became of the girl and of the other lover who stayed at home?

Back we came to the musty archives, and it was a treat to see the old chemist rattling off their crabbed Latin with a facility that would put to shame the average man from an English public school—this old man who waits from morning to night in his shop dispensing drugs to all his humble clients. I came to Puigcerda with a note of introduction to him in my pocket, but of all men in this indolent Spanish town he was the most difficult to find with leisure upon his hands. I never found him otherwise than occupied, with his pharmacy full of patiently waiting people, to each one of whom he had something to say, some shrewd enquiry to address, some exchange of news to offer. Seven days a week, for twelve hours every day, he toils away here, mingling humanity with business. He is seventy-four years of age, he never takes any exercise, he has never known a day's illness in the whole course of his life. His father, he says, was afflicted with gout, but no illness has ever come his way. Health, he surmises, is a gift of God. Outside there is the insanitary street; within, behind the closed door, a crowd of country people in a stuffy shop.

Senhor Marti is one of those disturbing people who upset one's accepted convictions; for he is a scholar and a gentleman, though never at a public school; a man in perfect health, though he never takes exercise; a linguist, though he has never travelled; and a man of wide humanity, though he has passed his life, like his ancestors, in a little provincial town. He has been Mayor of Puigcerda, and took a prominent part in its defence against the Carlist troops; yet,

benign and gentle, he is essentially a man of peace. I take off my hat to Senhor Marti.

I walked down the hot flaming streets, past the white marble portal of the Church of St. Dominic, one of whose wings is now a Spanish prison, to an old Gothic house used as a school by the teaching friars. In a small chapel I was shown the fine painting of the Virgin appearing to St. Joseph de Calasanz, founder of their Order, by Villadomat, the Catalan painter. Villadomat was renowned in his day and generation ; but fate visited him with a terrible infliction, for he, the painter, was paralyzed in both hands during the last seventeen years of his life.

Upstairs there was the library, with its perfectly-printed fifteenth-century volumes and great antiphons with four-lined Gregorian music and illuminated capitals, the product of loving and pliant hands and of a leisured age, when those who wished it could pass a whole lifetime, secluded and at peace, in such quiet backwaters, out of the rude and swirling current of mediæval life. One could see that each of these great letters, with its minute delicate tracery, in pale purple and pink, running off into long involute tendrils down the sides of the vellum page, must have taken days, weeks even, of the happy toil of a craftsman unconscious of time. Merely to look at such a page is to be carried away as by a magic hand into a world of tranquillity and harmonious peace. The building in which these teaching friars are now housed dates back to a long-distant age. It was built perhaps 500 years ago, as the house of a noble citizen of Puigcerda, and has been owned by the friars since the eighteenth century. The library roof is stained with damp, and its old volumes seem little cared for. From its windows one can see bits of the old fortified and loopholed wall, as it stood in the days of the last Carlist war ; and its surface still bears traces of their musketry.

From this old house, with its memories of other days, the road descends through meadows, like those at Iffley, where the hay lies in swathes ; and past luxuriant cornfields and rushing streams, and through a long avenue of poplars, till it makes the International Bridge over the swift Raour.

Here is one of those meeting-places of two nations which by their very contrasts rouse one's interest. At one end of the bridge stand the sentries of Spain, at the other those of France; and, though but a few yards divide them, these men are wholly apart, and stand for two distinct civilizations. They do not even understand each other's speech, for the Spaniards are Castilians, and you can be very fluent at one end of the bridge, and fail completely to be understood at the other. The people of the country, it is true, are all of one blood and one language, and the beautiful landscape of the Cerdagne knows no distinction. It is all one peaceful and exquisite vale. Yet are there profound, and even obvious, differences at work. The laughing Raour separates the political genius of the Iberian and the Gaul. The heart that beats at Bourg-Madame is the heart of Paris ; that across the little strip of water is the heart of Spain, of Madrid. The Frenchman who wrested this bit of earth from Spain 250 years ago has, with his wonderful gift of assimilation, converted the Catalan on his side of the water into a bulwark of France. Politically these ancient kinsmen are ready to fly at each other's throats ; and although the Catalan of Spain is the least Spanish of her people, he is visibly and markedly influenced by Spanish rather than by Gallic ideals.

The success of France is doubtless mainly due to her greater administrative efficiency. Within her borders there is the white national highway, perfectly kept in order, an admirable system of State education, an efficient post-office, the electric train, and a great scheme of logical development in the future. In Spain, the instant one crosses the bridge, there is the bad road, the easy-going clerical school, the *tartane*, and the mule. France is driving her tunnel through the Pyrenees at Ax, and Bourg-Madame will soon be linked with Paris ; but Puigcerda, with all her pride of place, her glorious record, her superb outlook, is isolated, and still far from the centres of Spanish life. She lives in the past and in a hazy, nebulous future, dreaming of her Day-after-to-morrow ; while the Frenchman stamps forward in the face of all his disasters, in spite of the degeneracy eating at his vitals, strenuous,

alert, and active, the man of the hour. How long, I often wonder, will the Spanish Catalan, with his contempt for Madrid, endure these mortifying contrasts?

Bourg-Madame is an obscure village of one street, a *gamine* by comparison with her queenly neighbour seated so proudly on her hill. M. Emmanuel Brousse, Député for the Pyrénées-Orientales, insists, with laudable patriotism, that his countrymen should make their centre, when visiting this district, at Bourg-Madame; but less patriotic people, and certainly all travellers of other nationalities, will go as of right to Puigcerda, the natural capital of the Cerdagne.

Bourg-Madame has a little history of her own. She began life some two hundred years ago under the modest designation of La Guingette, or The Inn, as a sort of offshoot of Hix, which though now a very humble hamlet, was once the chosen of Kings and the summer resort of the Aragonese Court. The inn prospered at this meeting-place of France and Spain, and little by little what remained of Hix betook itself to this more favoured locality; as in an earlier century it had migrated to Puigcerda, founded by King Hildefonso of Aragon in 1177. In 1815, after Napoleon had lost at Waterloo, the Duc d'Angoulême entered the Cerdagne via Ripoll, from his place of exile in Barcelona, and received a warm welcome from the citizens of La Guingette, who begged him to let them change its name to that of Bourg Angoulême. The Duke gallantly replied that he would prefer it named in honour of his august and heroic wife, the only surviving daughter of Louis XVI.; whence its name of Bourg-Madame. Those who are curious in such matters will find all this set forth in a royal ordonnance, bearing the name of Louis Antoine of France, Son of France, Duke of Angoulême, and Governor of five military divisions; of which a copy still survives as the charter of Bourg-Madame.

All about here, on this borderland of France and Spain, there are exquisite meadows and cornfields, into which one is tempted to enter and be at ease. Finding the sun still hot, I turned aside to a line of willow-trees, and in their shade, with a balmy breeze blowing about me, I found an

ideal climate. The meadow at my feet, sloping down to the plain, was of a startling green enamelled with buttercups, and upon its jewelled surface three men in velvet were working with long forks, collecting all the little stones, and apparently trying to make this meadow more perfect than it already was. Far away beyond them spread the green fields, the scarlet poppies, the daisies, the violet vetch, the pollards by the water-courses, and the sloping cornlands. Midway, someone was loading a cart with hay, and the dun-cattle waited patiently under their yoke. Behind, exposed to view, were the granite boulders embedded in the old moraine upon which Puigcerda now rears her proud head. One can see at a glance how the great glacier of the Carol must have moved for its thousands of years down the narrow valley into this open plain. But there were no green fields here then, no human associations. It was a cold Arctic valley, unpeopled and unknown, yet marching through all those numberless years slowly towards the fulfilment of its destiny.

Presently I went into the field, and talked to the farmer, a fine bluff old man with blue eyes, and in his looks very much like an Englishman of the same class. A hundred yards away stood his farmhouse, built of the grey granite of the moraine, with its white-curtained windows, and its courtyard full of waggons and lowing cattle. There are many such peasant farmers here, grave in their manners, laborious and painstaking in their lives, proud with some of the dignity inseparable from Spain. But there is an absence, that is almost complete, of gentlemen in our sense of the word, of a landed gentry, a visible, long-established, upper class. Well-to-do people there are, some of them immensely rich, but these are of the type of the successful man of business—people who own villas and châteaux in the Cerdagne, but whose real centre is in Barcelona, the prosperous city. The old feudal aristocracy seem, as in the Roussillon, to have completely disappeared ; showing that these changes lie deep in the character of the people, and have little to do with the form of government. Here is to all intents and purposes a complete democracy, the only visible distinction being one of wealth.

Before me, as I lay in the meadow reflecting upon these things, there rose the two great peaks which, like watch-towers, stand sentinel over the French highway through the Carol Valley, which Mazarin won from Spain. They are a very striking feature of the landscape, very blue and alpine and magnificent, above the soft green world at their feet. Towards sunset, when the sun's orb is just sinking over the heights of Andorra, they are visited by long fans of violet light, which come streaming through the western passes, while the valley is already dark with shadows. These same fans of light stream upwards over the mountains behind which the sun has gone down, like last messages in space; and all the northern half of the Vale of the Cerdagne passes in an instant from sunlight, too vivid to be faced, to the soft harmonies of evening; while the great Sierra del Cadi and the Cols of Jou and Tosas still glow in the light. This is the perfect hour, and it comes with a magical swiftness.

Light is in fact the pre-eminent quality of this little world, the enchantment that gives it its remarkable beauty. Alas that its soft peacefulness should have to give way to the factory chimney, the international railway, the clamour and the ugliness of modern life! One would be content to have here some better roads, and one good homelike inn some way out of the town, amidst the green meadows on the old moraine, and so be enabled to come here each year and enjoy this serene little world in contentment and peace. But that is, perhaps, too personal a desire.

One day I went out to Llivia, which has a history as unique as that of Andorra. It began as a Roman colony, and remained for centuries, under Latin and Visigoth and Moor, the capital of the Cerdagne. It was deprived of its pride of place by the growth of Puigcerda in the thirteenth century, and might have sunk, like many other great places, into a quiet oblivion, had not the French under Louis Quatorze annexed that portion of the Spanish Cerdagne in which it stands, to leave their road open from the Roussillon into France. The Treaty of the Pyrenees gave them the right to thirty-three *villages*, and Llivia must have passed to France had she not suddenly recollected her imperial origin

and her ancient status as a town. A village she certainly was not, and the French Commissioners had to give way. But all the country round about went to France, and Llivia remained in proud isolation, an island of Spain in the progressive sea of France. Thus, while all the world about her moves forward, Llivia remains stationary, and all but forgotten. She pays her heavy taxes to Madrid, but gets nothing in return, and lives by contraband. Her only physical link with Spain is by the famous *chemin neutre*, which is one of the comic anomalies of her position.

We descended the steep road from Puigcerda to Bourg-Madame, and, being gently entreated by the French douanier at the bridge over the Raour, passed through France along her smooth white highway, and turned up the neutral way, which ran yellow and rough and neglected across the beautiful plain to this singular territory. Here were flocks of white sheep by the wayside, and golden cornfields five feet high on either hand, and between them, glowing ahead of us in the sun, with the square pyramidal church-tower of Llivia in the distance, was this road that belongs to no one. Llivia itself is a hard, rough-looking village, which bears about it the unmistakable air of former greatness and of a remote antiquity. As one passes up its narrow and dirty streets, one notices vast granite doorways, and the church, with its massive tower and tapering spire and fortified bastions and walls, manifestly dates back to the time when Llivia was of more account than it is now.

I was fortunate in the moment of my arrival, for as I climbed up the narrow street to the church, leaving the empty *plaza* behind me, I met a religious procession which was like an illumined page from the Middle Ages; it was the feast of Corpus Christi. First there came some choir-boys in pale blue robes and white surplices, then a host of little girls in white with chaplets of white roses about their hair, and all very devout, with prayer-books in their white-gloved hands, while in their midst there walked an old nun in black, with her swaying girdle and rosary and protecting air. Next round the corner, following the same path upon which someone had scattered the red petals of poppies, came the more gorgeous youths in purple and scarlet (the very

SUNSET IN ANDORRA (*page* 279)

ESCALDAS, ANDORRA IN THE DISTANCE (*page* 279)

colours of the fields outside) and white intricate lace, holding aloft all sorts of emblazoned banners of white satin, painted. After these the old men of Llivia, carrying heavy silken folds of crimson and green damask enriched with fringes of gold; and then an old solemn priest with the face of a child, a book in his hands, wrapped in a silken embroidered cover like a thing of price; and after him more banners, and glancing colour, and women with dark eyes; and last of all a silken canopy upheld on six shining gilded poles, under which the Body of Christ was borne in a jewelled Ostensoir. While this wonderful procession passed up the ancient streets, the big bells high up in the open tower pealed out with all their might, the ringers, like athletes, visible in their midst; and then all who were afoot entered the solemn church, and the baldachino being carried to its place by the gilded high-altar, and all the little angels in white and blue being seated, the solemn service began.

Behind the massive church there rose the bold isolated hill, patterned with glowing cornfields, upon whose summit stood the ancient château of Llivia, the first stronghold of the Cerdagne. One can still see its outline of dark stones a few feet above the surface of the rock.

From Llivia I returned by the neutral road, and presently turned up into France by the cross-road which leads to Ur. Here were more fields, and a rushing canal under the alders by the wayside, and fencing laid on big granite posts roughly hewn from the abundant quarries of the hills. At Ur the road to Escaldas ran up a narrow green valley, ascending always past old villages and church-towers along the sheer banks of the foaming Raour to this watering-place of the Cerdagne. There were massive buildings here of granite, with wide terraces, a plunging cascade, an umbrageous park heavy with horse-chestnuts in bloom, and firs, and tasselled limes, and meadows as rich as those of the Tyrol, starred with the gracious things we call narcissus, and buttercups, and clover. The people here seemed kind and civil, and the prices very modest—from 5 to 8 pesetas a day. The hotel is usually full of Spanish visitors in midsummer. Like most of these mineral watering-places, it is enclosed in a narrow valley, and therefore lacks the spacious beauty, the wide prospects, of the Cerdagne.

Returning, we turned off to the right at Ur, and climbed the wide plateau which spreads here under the campanile of old Belloch, till it reaches out far into the Cerdagne plain and ends abruptly at Puigcerda. It is traversed by the national road which heads for Paris through the Valley of Carol, the road for which Mazarin fought. White, and smooth under foot, it is a perfect road, lined on both sides with luxuriant cornfields, through whose golden curving vistas we looked out upon the whole Vale of the Cerdagne, from the Col de la Perche to the massive Spanish grandeur of the Sierra del Cadi. The sky was heavy with purple clouds, through which the sun shone fiercely at intervals, falling like a searchlight upon Llivia, transfiguring it ; upon Osseja, upon Hix, upon the chequered fields, and upon the flocks of white sheep as they moved like water over the steep boundaries between the rustling fields of corn. Before us lay Enveitg, on the sloping hillside, facing south ; and beyond it the blue misty valley of Carol, shut in by the frowning mountains. Hence we turned back to Puigcerda, crossing the frontier at a small boundary-stone that was guarded by no sentinel, and presently we were by the waters of its little shining lake, the summer evening closing in, in serene and lucent harmonies. The same evening at the Circulo Agricola Mercantil there was dancing in the ballroom, and the pretty girls of Puigcerda assembled there arrayed in all their fineries.

My last day in Puigcerda was now come, and I determined to devote it to a visit to yet another of those villages which, however they may fail upon close inspection, to respond to fastidious expectations, beckon one in the distance like the enchanted visions of some Utopia. I therefore once more descended to Bourg-Madame, past the "Iffley" meadows and green pollards by the water, along the patterned road, over the bridge, and under the watchful eyes of the douaniers of two nations, and so entered France and found the "dilly" at the Salvat Inn. I was in good time to secure the box-seat by the driver, but soon found that this was reserved for the Inspector of Post-Offices, a potentate in this fraction of the world. Presently he came forth escorted by the polite postmaster with his flowing beard, and the postman in his

blue blouse, and after many polite attentions of the kind with which, as an old *fonctionnaire* myself, I am familiar, he took his (my) seat, shaking the postmaster by the hand, hoping to that worthy man's visible gratification that they might meet in Perpignan, and reaching out two condescending digits to the pushing republican postman in the dusty road. A live lion, I thought, is better than a mere T.G., and with this philosophical reflection I took a seat inside the "dilly." To do my neighbour justice, I must say, however, that he looked a little abashed at the determination of his myrmidons to exalt him to the seat of honour, for the educated Frenchman has always, unless ruffled, a clear perception of what good manners require. We travelled, therefore, amicably enough together.

The white road lay up the valley, gently ascending through a long avenue of poplars whose blue shadows lay in clear-cut bars across it. Behind us rose Puigcerda, grey upon her hill, and the great peaks towards Foix, very stately and alpine in their perfection of colour and form. We entered Osseja, and stopped under its tall church-tower. Here, embedded in the back of the church, is the solid old romanesque apse, all that now survives of its first church. Osseja is the most notable village of the French Cerdagne, and charmingly seated at the threshold of the Puig Mal, where the Valley of La Vanera opens on the smiling plain. Behind it, high up on the mountain-side, is its dark communal forest, once the haunt of the bear and boar, and still frequented by an occasional wolf, by foxes and wild-cats and great birds of prey. Its orchards boast some of the finest pears of France, which travel as far as Barcelona and Toulouse. It is an old settlement, with records which go back to the early years of the ninth century; and an old parchment at the mairie bears the signature of Count Guifred of the Cerdagne, dated in the year 1030. Its charming situation tempts many Spanish visitors here in summer, some of whom have built luxurious country-houses, like the Villa Antoinette, with its handsome marble stairways and lawns and flower-garden.

From Osseja the "dilly" went on to Saillagouse, athwart bare downs less beautiful than the poplar-lined road. We stopped once to take a bag of letters from a boy who had

come down from a mountain hamlet, and again to pick up an old peasant woman, who waited for us under her large parasol, with a Spanish fan which she used with vigour. The days of the "dilly" here are numbered, for the new electric railway from Mont Louis to Bourg-Madame is ready; the stations are already occupied by the wives of the *chefs des gares*, and the formal opening of the railway is near at hand. We could see from the slowly-moving "dilly" the shining rails making their loops and curves all along the foot-hills and the sloping downs. So the old world passes, ushering in the new.

At Saillagouse I lunched, being furnished, at this humble inn, with good eggs, a fresh trout, green peas *à la Française*, a caramel, wine, and cheese; after which I sat outside sipping my coffee and watching the easy world go by. A little way off rose the village church, and when I entered it I found the old *Curé* seated in his scarlet and lace upon the altar steps, instructing in rich, sonorous tones the little boys of Saillagouse in the immortal precepts of their faith. It was a homely and picturesque ceremony, with that touch of simplicity which clings to the Roman Church in spite of all her grandeur. Outside, again, there were the clover-fields, and men ploughing with oxen, making their long furrows up and down under the climbing church-tower, and the poplars marshalled like an army in the foreground of the steel-blue hills.

Later I took the returning "dilly" back to Bourg-Madame, and spent the perfect evening in my "Iffley" hayfield under the heights of Puigcerda. The long shadows fell across the green cornfields at my feet, while beyond them spread the sunlit landscape I had just traversed. There was Osseja, looking the beau-ideal of a little mountain village, halfway between the great snow-topped mass of the Puig Mal and the swelling lands of corn and violet vetch below. But in truth these idyllic places are best seen from a distance; and, if one must say it, there is nothing in all this exquisite valley to compare, very near at hand, with the perfect and intimate beauty of our own villages. Civilization is less advanced here, and all those gracious things that we are wont to associate with old English village life—the trim thorn hedges, the cottage

gardens, the old Rectory, and the Hall—are wanting. This is a country to visit, to look at, to greatly enjoy for its perfect landscapes, its appeal to the imagination, its wondrous mysteries of light, even for its curious old-world details and mode of life; but how could it ever take the place in an Englishman's heart, of his own gracious and beautiful countryside? For there is nothing in Southern Europe—perhaps anywhere in the world—to quite equal the finished perfection of our little islands.

Yet as I came, almost reluctantly, to this conclusion, a very beautiful scene spread before my eyes. The soft evening air was laden with the music of tolling cow-bells, the twittering of birds, and the rich voices of women moving along the road which leads from here down into France. More than one beautiful face glowed under the willow-trees, and at least one superb figure went swaying down the road with such grace as is given only to the South. It seemed good to be alive; and yet—what was this that was lacking somewhere far down in the depths of one's consciousness? I fell to wondering what it would be like to live in an eclectic world, made up of the best things earth has to offer—a world of Pyrenean sunlight, and soft mountain air, and snow-touched summits, and caressing warmth, with a glint of Mediterranean blue, and—ah yes! the immemorial elms, the brooding charm, of an English countryside!

But then how infinitely more terrible would Death be, with his sombre visage, summoning one away from it all!

BOOK VIII

ANDORRA

CHAPTER I

THE VALLEY OF CAROL

NEAR THE LAKE OF ANGULASTRE, ANDORRA

I LEFT Puigcerda at ten o'clock in the morning, and, after driving down to Bourg-Madame for a last visit to the French poste restante, took the level road to Ur, and thence along the old moraine to Enveitg, following always the hastening canal. You would never dream that this fresh and lively thing had been here for 600 years. It has throughout this long period brought joy and prosperity to the countryside, and is the source of the bright, sparkling, lake of Puigcerda. Made by the citizens of this old town in the year of grace 1310 at a cost of 500 ducats, its ownership was vested in them once for all by a royal deed of Sancho, King of Majorca and Count of the Cerdagne. No subsequent vicissitudes have deprived them of this valued possession. The Treaty of the Pyrenees left this stream, which flows through French soil, a Spanish water, and its integrity is guaranteed by an international convention.

The road along which it runs is a beautiful road, with its cornfields, its willows, its avenues of fine trees, and its meadows rich with daisies and buttercups.

Presently the wide spaces narrow, and one enters the gorge of the Carol, or, as some call it, the Aravo. Here, where the river now rushes tumultuously on its way, the very emblem of unrest, of an energy that seems almost passionate and alive, there moved in the long past, with its slow and solemn progress of a few yards every hundred years, the great glacier of the Carol. One does not need to be a geologist, or to be gifted with imagination, to realize what the valley, so smiling now with its green meadows and cornfields, must have been during those countless years when the great river of ice, hundreds of feet thick, and wide as the valley itself, ground its portentous way, shaping the vast granite boulders, smoothening the mammoth rocks, and leaving, always plain and legible even to a careless eye, the evidences of its passage. One can see just how high it rose, from the polished sides of the mountains, and one can picture its mighty bulk. Now, in its place, the river foams and rushes fiercely along, villages find sustenance, and rhododendrons display their rosy beauty to the sun. At two points man has chosen these smooth leviathan rocks whereon to erect his castles, now in ruins and mere relics of a day that has also closed for ever. These are the towers at Carol attributed by the country people to Los Moros and the Tour Cerdagne at Porté. They are relics of Spain, and were built here to resist any advance from France over the Col of Puigmorens. The Tour Cerdagne was the last outpost of Aragon here upon the menacing border of France, and 600 years ago it served as a prison for James II., the unfortunate King of Majorca.

The inhabitants of the valley were exempted by Martin, King of Aragon, in 1399, from arrest for debt, lest the watch and ward of the Spanish castles should suffer from the imprisonment of their natural defenders, and an old ordinance of the same period, issued in the name of Diego Hurtado, Prince of Malta and Captain-General of the Principalities of Catalonia, the Roussillon, and the Cerdagne, speaks of the government of the valley, and of the functions of the Al

Caide of the Château of Carol. Long before this, from the earliest days of its human occupation, the defensive power of the valley must have been perceived by all men, and the Roman Prefect at Julia Llivia doubtless kept, like his successors of Aragon, a watchful eye upon this Khyber of the Cerdagne.

The fine national highway runs past these monuments of another day, displaying its mile-posts — "864 miles from Paris." It follows of necessity the windings of the river, and here the Trans-Pyrenean Railway will in due course make its way. But, with the modern daring which so far surpasses the greatest efforts of Rome, it will go straight through the intervening mountain at Puigmorens; and the mouth of the tunnel already yawns dark and sombre in the very bowels of the glacial rock on which there stand the ruins of the old Tour Cerdagne.

What a sequence of events is here, what transitions over vast intervals of time! how frail and ephemeral by contrast the life of a man!

The Col of Puigmorens, along which the "dillys" still take their lumbering way, attains a height of 6,000 feet. Pleasant enough in summer, it is in winter white with snow, and driven by the fierce *tramontana*, which descends upon the valley with terrific impetuosity from the high summits of the Carlitte and Andorra. It is hard and dangerous work at this season crossing this high and exposed pass. Monsieur Thiers has left a vivid narrative of his own journey over it in winter, which it seems worth while to reproduce.

"On leaving the Tour de Carol," he wrote, "one is caught in the maze of a narrow defile, and from here it is a two hours' journey to the foot of the pass. The last village, before one begins the crossing, is Porté, where the traveller halts to gather courage for the enterprise before him. I had not conceived that any wind could be so powerful and so positively *solid* as that which blows here through this gorge. A dry, stinging, snow had whipped us as we came, penetrating the very interstices of our clothes. At Porté I hurried to the fire, but I could feel nothing, and it was long before I recovered my sensibility. The wild violence of the storm up in the mountains filled me with alarm.

THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE OF ANDORRA (*page* 287)

THE PRINCE BISHOP OF ANDORRA AND THE COUNCIL OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS (*page* 287)

"'Sir,' said my young guide, 'I feel sure of getting across myself, but I cannot answer for you.'

"'And why not?' I inquired.

"'Because I do exactly what you are unwilling to do. I go on foot, I take off my cloak when the wind is too violent, I roll in the snow, and, see! I am not afraid.'

"I took his advice to heart, and decided forthwith to continue my journey. I was bitten with curiosity to see the storm raging over the pass, and wished to judge for myself whether the imagination of the people of the country had overpainted the scenes they had described. My sufferings this time were less, for I was better accustomed to the cold and the wind, and it was now nearly midday. Yet there were moments in my passage over the Col that beggar description. For a few seconds there would be a perfect calm, broken by no other movement than the slow, silent falling of the snow. These were the intervals I seized to look about me, but they were all too brief. The wind would suddenly come down with a wholly unexpected fury, driving the snow before it, lifting into the air that which was falling with that which lay upon the ground, and lashing it into waves like those of the sea, and into a blinding foam. The desolation of such moments it is wholly impossible for me to describe. The swift changes of form, the renewed falling of the snow, the unexpected contours of the clouds, the loud roaring of the wind, made me feel as though I were assisting at the destruction of a world. It was during one of these terrific moments that I was struck with a wonderful spectacle. I had reached the summit of the pass, and before descending on the farther side I turned for an instant to look back. There before me lay in succession, valley beyond valley, enveloped in clouds to the farthest limits of the horizon, when of a sudden, while the sky over our heads was still dark and stormy, these clouds in the valleys lifted, and I saw afar off the country out of which I had come, luminous in the bright sunlight, and apparently steeped in unchanging calm. This tranquil scene viewed by me, as it were, from out of the very heart of the storm, and touched with the magic of distance, enraptured my spirit, and made me forget all the toils of my journey."

But there was no hint of such things on the day of my own visit. It was a perfect summer day, and the sun shone, and the birds sang in the branches by the wayside. At Porté I halted outside the village, and took my lunch by the edge of the river, under a bridge with which I felt a certain kinship, since it bore a date with which I am familiar. The engineers, I reflected, were building it when I was coming into the world, but it will continue to fulfil its purpose long after I have withered into dust.

Such reflections come, perhaps naturally enough, to a solitary traveller in a foreign country, and in the midst of such mighty manifestations of change and succession as characterize this remarkable valley. But there is a charm in bright sunlight, in the music of hastening waters, and in the sights and scenes of a quiet rural life, which soon lulls one's spirit into a sort of beatific content that is concerned only with the present. It was the hour of the midday meal, and the Spanish workmen from the tunnel were moving across to the village for their food. A flock of sheep was browsing some way off upon the common-lands, filling the air with the music of their bells. The old horse that had brought us up the valley was standing peacefully, his eyes blinking and his ears low, in a side-stream, cooling his legs; a fisherman was slowly marching up the river whipping it for trout.

Presently there came along a man of bold demeanour, hard and clean-cut of feature, and as wide about his velvet trousers as a Dutchman of Volendam. He talked French well, had travelled far, and gave me his name as Couderc, late baker of Porté, and now Secretary of the Strike. "We are determined, monsieur," he said, "we *ouvriers*, men of our hands, to get our rights, and, my faith, we shall get them! I am not here for nothing." He looked formidable enough, with his hard jaw and swelling garments. "Have you given up baking, then?" I asked. "Yes, monsieur," he answered proudly; "my health forbids my undertaking such toil; but I am the lessee of the fishing in the Lake of Fontvive, and if you should care to come up with me and try your luck at salmon trout, I am entirely at your service.

It is but a short way up the valley, and I can get you a mule if you prefer to ride." Here was a tempting proposition; but my mind was made up to proceed at once to Andorra.

At Puigcerda, at the weekly fair, I had been introduced to a man who assured me the new carriage-road to Soldeu was ready, all but the mile-posts. "I know," he said, "because my cousin is employed in carrying up the mile-posts." But at Porté, which is at the very gates of Andorra, quite another view prevailed. Old men who came up and joined us solemnly assured me that the road was by no means finished. The postmistress, to whom we presently went for information, was emphatic that the road was open, for, she said, the *facteur*, who had come over that very morning from Andorra, had told her so. But when we sent for the *facteur* he was not to be found. I had heard much of the new French road into Andorra from M. Charles Romeu, the Viguier of France, who has laboured for thirty years to introduce French civilization into the valleys; and I was eager to be the first person to enter the secluded republic on wheels. Yet here at Porté no one could possibly say whether there was a road or not. As to a vehicle, I could get a *brek*, said Monsieur Couderc, from his friend Garetta, who was willing to go as far as the border. I therefore closed with Monsieur Garetta, and got the postmistress, who had become quite flushed with these discussions, to wire for me at once to 'Cisco de Sans, the renowned muleteer of Andorra, to meet me at the Andorran border the next day at noon.

I had now to find shelter at Porté for the night, and, accompanied by the worthy Couderc, secretary of the strike, adjourned to the only inn, the Hôtel Barnole, called Michette. "This inn," says M. Emmanuel Brousse in his enthusiastic handbook on the French Cerdagne, "is one of the most renowned *posadas* of the Cerdagne, and it has not usurped its reputation. For two francs one makes there an excellent repast, and for one franc one sleeps well in a comfortable bed, installed in a room that is most clean and well furnished, and whence bugs are scrupulously excluded."

But the inn into which I was ushered was in lamentable contrast with these expectations. It was little better than the home of a dirty Catalan peasant; "the creatures" referred to

were not by any means excluded; the odours were of that class with which I was presently destined to become familiar in Andorra; and the proprietor and his wife were an old Spanish couple whose one idea was to spoil the Egyptian. It was not till the next morning that I discovered that the "Barnole called Michette" was the building next door, and that it had not yet been opened for the summer. Whether it would have proved any better I cannot say.

Monsieur Couderc, I found, was an habitué at this inn. With his napkin tucked under his chin, a big loaf at his elbow, hot food on his plate, and streams of red wine constantly flowing down his upturned throat, he seemed to be doing well. The strike was evidently a paying proposition. He was an obliging fellow, was this secretary of revolt, with a hearty manner and an iron and enthusiastic grip. The last thing, as I was turning in, my nose striving hard to ignore the odours of the inn, he came in to assure me of his devotion.

"Send for me," he said, waving his hand at large, "even if you want me in the middle of the night. Sleep well, and let your mind be at peace. I myself will rouse you at dawn, and accompany you to the head of the pass. No, no! make no protest. I am entirely at your disposition."

CHAPTER II

INTO ANDORRA

PONT DE ST. ANTONI, ANDORRA

I LEFT Porté at dawn, and a very beautiful dawn it was. Small clouds high up in the blue heaven, in floating over the shadowy valley, glowed in the high rays of the still invisible sun. Far enough above you, they seemed to say, it is always sunlight, and there is neither darkness nor night. Presently, as the world swung upwards, the mighty peaks became illumined, the white snow on their summits shining in the bright radiance, and the mists drifting about them, now grey, now incandescent. Yet later the old fortified Castle of Aragon, the Tour Cerdagne, caught the sunlight far down in the centre of the profound valley, and glowed proudly upon its massive base of glacial rock. Meanwhile we were ascending the Col of Puigmorens by the long winding carriage-road, in the teeth of a fresh breeze. "*Peutêtre trop frais*," as the driver said.

We were alone, the two of us, Monsieur Couderc having failed to present himself.

"How about Couderc?" I said to his friend Garetta.

"Couderc?" he said—"oh, that's his way. He has a long tongue and a large appetite, but he does nothing. He feeds at the hotel and never pays."

"Secretary of the Strike? Yes! He is fond of making trouble and gets a piece of a hundred sous out of it now and then."

"The Lac de Fontvive? Oh yes, he is the lessee; and

he goes off there and catches trout sometimes: it amuses him. As to money—not much."

Garetta, I found, was a very different man to Couderc, as slight and fair and Northern in his type as the other was big and dark and flamboyant, with the opulent flamboyance of the South. He is the very image of my friend H. S., the African explorer, and perhaps for this reason I could not get rid of the conviction that he was an Englishman, and not a Frenchman at all. But, in truth, the man's whole manner of thinking, of speech, of action, his pose, were English.

"At Porté," he said, "monsieur, we are completely shut in by the snow in winter, and often cannot get out of our houses. *Par Dieu*, it is the life of a slave. One might as well be in prison."

"The International Railway? No fear, it is going to deprive us of what few advantages we do possess. Until now, Porté has at least stood at the head of the valley, a place necessary to travellers over the Col, but when the tunnel is finished who will give a thought to Porté?"

He sat on the box in his thin blue cotton smock, the wind as we crossed the Col lashing our faces and chilling us to the bone. It died down somewhat as we descended, but a heavy white fog, as drenching as fine rain, enveloped us, and went with us all the way to the Andorran frontier. We could just see the green slopes of the mountains embroidered with flowers, and the foaming rivulets faintly visible through the grey driving mists. We presently came upon the solitary postman flattened against the wet hillside to let us pass. Nearly every day of his life, through the driving snow, the white mists, and the bright sunshine of summer days, this faithful servant crosses from Andorra into France, and from France into Andorra. What a singular life, and what bodily efficiency it demands! It has its perils also, for more than once the postman of Andorra has lost his life in a snow-storm upon this high mountain-pass.

In fine weather we should have seen, as we came, the beautiful Valley of the Ariège descending towards Foix and the Solana of Andorra, whose sunlit pasturelands have for centuries been in dispute between the Andorrans and their neighbours; we should have looked far back, as did Monsieur

Thiers, down the Valley of Carol to the smiling plain of the Cerdagne; but the fog, *ce cochon de brouillard*, as my companion called it, sealed our eyes, and we came blindfolded into the jealous republic.

Monsieur Romeu's new road had brought us thus far—an unfinished road, to be sure, and lacking the perfection of the true Route Nationale, but a thing practicable and stamped with French efficiency. It came abruptly to an end in a bog peopled by vast granite boulders. This was Andorra, and Garetta declared he could go no farther.

"Why," he said, "do we make roads for these Andorrans? Why do we give them post-offices, the telegraph? Why do we let their traffic free into France? *Par Dieu!* I know not. The Spaniards, who squeeze out of Andorra all they can levy in the way of impositions, know better how to treat them."

"Well, I suppose it extends your political influence?"

"What political influence can we exert over such fellows as these Andorrans? You don't know them as well as I do. Trust the Andorran to look after himself," and he flung away the end of his cigarette in disgust.

It was bitter cold, and we fled for shelter to one of those shepherds' cabins which, like the habitations of some long-departed pigmy race, are a feature of the Catalonian hills. They are of the rudest description, made of rough stones piled upon each other and gradually converging to a dome, with some tussocks of grass and mud spread on the roof to help keep out the rain. One enters by a low-browed doorway, just big enough for a pig, and inside there is darkness and dirt. Yet there are times when just this much of shelter makes all the strange difference between the life and death of a man.

The cabin we sought was already occupied by a family of pigs, who sallied forth intensely angry at being disturbed in their warm reveries, and we—were glad to take their place. Garetta's fingers were stiff and blue with the cold; his teeth chattered like those of a man in an ague; he had come unprovided with a cloak, and had suffered much on the way. Indeed, it was only by getting out of the *brek* and running up and down the road, that we had kept any warmth in us at

all. With some ado we lighted a fire, which gave us warmth, but so nearly blinded us with its acrid smoke—for there was neither fireplace nor chimney, nor even a smokehole, in this neolithic habitation—that we were driven from time to time out into the cold again to give our eyes a rest.

What a grey, melancholy picture it was outside! The pigs looming disconsolate and vast in the mist; the slushy black stream meandering amidst the boulders; no sound but that of the infant Ariège tumbling somewhere in the invisible, on its way to sea. Was I really here in the sunny South of France, upon the edge of Spain, in the month of June? or was this a Connaught bog in December, and had my soul gone astray?

But the penetrating cold soon drove me back to Garetta and the crude realities of the cabin.

Thus two hours passed, black care and optimism chasing each other through our minds, till at last the voice of a man came blowing through the mist, and out of the grey void there appeared a black Andorran mule with scarlet and yellow saddlebags, and bright trappings, and a sheepskin saddle, in the care of 'Cisco de Sans, the renowned muleteer. Here was indubitably Spain, and my spirits rose with the grateful feel of the stirrup irons, as I climbed into the best of all seats in the world. The mule Chatto was, I was informed, an aristocrat in his way, being the habitual mount of Monseigneur the Prince-Bishop of Urgell, and of His Excellency the French Viguier of Andorra—an animal alive to international amenities and the requirements of distinguished travellers.

Thus was I appropriately launched upon a little country which for eleven hundred years has retained its independence, thanks to its dual suzerainty and its own extraordinary inaccessibility.

Chatto carried me well up the grassy Col, which was still hidden in the mist and splashed with snow, and it was not till we had reached its summit, 7,500 feet above the sea, that a first touch of warmth came glowing through from Spain, and the mist began to lift, yielding the most tantalizing and wonderful glimpses of a world of dark iron-hued peaks and white fields of snow, until at last the whole envious curtain

THE WASHING POOL, ANDORRA

OLD CLOISTER OF ST. MICHEL DE CUXA, PRADES (*page* 109)

was swept away, and there rose in all her exalted beauty the alpine world of Andorra.

It was a rare and glorious spectacle worth coming far to see. Here we were at the summit of a world. Neither village nor habitation was in sight. All round us rose the towering peaks, black and sombre, with the snow lying in vast fields within their concave folds, the source of all the rivulets and streams which make up the Eastern Valira, one of the two arteries of the little republic. Here at one glance we could see the river at its birth, emerging from its white coverlet of snow, then falling swiftly through green meadows, in foaming cascades, and under the shadows of impending fir-trees, down, down, on its way past Andorra and Urgell to the Segre, to the Ebro, to the shores of an old-world sea.

Following its course, my eyes were arrested by a superb chain of starry peaks, blue and purple, with the snow lying in shining rays and spangles about their steep sides. Here were no mists as on the Pass of the Emballira, still grey behind us. The sky puffed with clouds shone clear and blue overhead, and the vivid forms of the mountains stood out in serene and majestic beauty.

As if by contrast with these magnificences of Nature, low down in the heart of the green valley there browsed herds of horses and vast flocks of white sheep, the music of their bells filling the air with melody. The sloping pasture-lands were emblazoned with flowers: narcissus and hyacinth, kingcups, buttercups, gentians of the deepest blue, pansies, forget-me-nots, anemones, and a multitude of other sweet and lovely things.

Wonderful it was to descend upon this valley, as it were from the clouds, and to find throughout its length not a human figure moving. All these centuries it has lain secluded, cut off from the outer world by its ring of mountains. But the days of its seclusion are numbered. A few miles away, not an hour's distance by motor-car, the Trans-Pyrenean tunnel from Porté to Hospitalet is nearly cut, and within a few years the world that frequents great international lines of communication will be passing by its very threshold—from Paris, to Barcelona, to Algiers, to Morocco, to the Sahara, to the ends of the world. It has

even been proposed to establish a new Monte Carlo in this exquisite valley, though as yet the Andorrans, anxious for their independence, have refused their consent. But how long can a poor community resist the financial wiles of Europe? The curtain is surely about to rise and display the recondite beauty of Andorra, to all who care to look upon her.

Descending the valley, we presently came into view of the magnificent tulip-like peak of Casamanya, soaring high into the empyrean, ruddy and beautiful, the central summit of the republic.

Chatto the mule stepped with his customary daintiness down the steep sides of the valley, but it was pleasanter afoot in the soft green turf, with its embroidery of flowers. Behind me walked the untiring 'Cisco, full of information in the international dialect he reserves for strangers who do not speak Andorran. Never was there such Esperanto nor French so murdered as on his lips!

"We Andorrans," he said, "belong neither to France nor to Spain. The nation of Andorra is free and independent. If we had to choose, mounseer? Oh well, then, I suppose it would be France. But why should we choose? There is no country like ours, and we manage our own affairs and we have no conscription."

In the heart of every Andorran that is the last, the most convincing, argument.

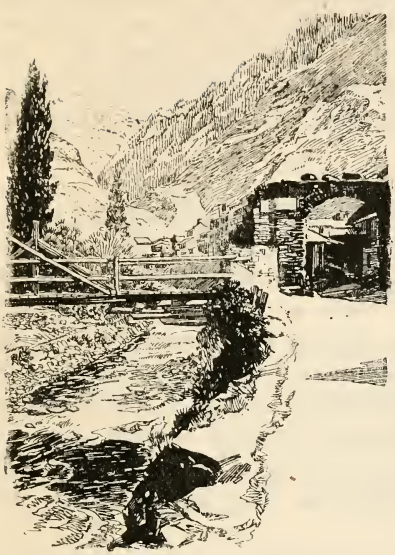
Monsieur Brutails, who knew Andorra as few outsiders have ever known it, had the same testimony from a notable of the valleys:

"To some of us the independence of our country is nothing, because she is poor and without industry or trade. For me it is a priceless boon, if only for the exemption it gives us from the blood-tax. It is priceless, because if parents in Andorra have a son they can say, 'He belongs to us,' and that is more than any of our neighbours can say. It is true our land is poor, but its poverty is ingrained; and it would be poorer still if it had to bear the imposts that would fall upon us were we Spaniards or Frenchmen."

So we came to the inn at Soldeu.

CHAPTER III

SOLDEU



SAN JULIA DE LORIA, ANDORRA

Soldeu is the first village or hamlet of any kind in Andorra that one reaches on entering it from the French side over the Emballira. Its people therefore are accustomed to the presence of travellers, and I was received at the inn with a ready hospitality, not unmixed with apprehension as to its acceptability to an exacting foreigner. I was shown to the best bedroom, and assured that it would be made very clean and proper for my use. In the centre of the house was a very large dining-room capable of seating a hundred guests, and there are possibly times when many congregate here. Off this room was the kitchen, where the people of the house keep warm, and chance travellers feed, and all the talk goes on. The inn has also a veranda overlooking the enamelled meadows and the river, and here I sat in the warm welcome sunlight and lunched.

I was glad to think that I was at last thoroughly entered into Andorra. Those whom I had consulted warned me that the accommodation at Soldeu was of the worst, and I had come prepared for adversity. But Soldeu proved better than its reputation. The inn was dirty indeed, but it was no worse than that at Porté ; and while the odours were of that indescribable kind that seem to linger about the Andorran house, one could escape from them by daylight into the open fields, and after dark to the kitchen, whence they seemed to be excluded. But there was no escape at

night, and I resigned myself to them with a traveller's philosophy. My bed I found was clean and comfortable, and though the floor would have broken a good Dutchwoman's heart, from my window there was a cheering view up the valley to the high Emballira, and the snowy heights of the Portail Blanche, under a blue and starry sky. By daylight there were pigs and fowls scratching about in the yard, a meadow with fruit-trees, and a small hastening canal.

I have known a worse location.

In the kitchen I was a member of the household and of the democratic world of Andorra. Under the big chimney there was a gipsy kettle hung on chains, bubbling with the *pièce de résistance* of the Andorran meal, a bouillon of sorts with bread and potatoes. Minor dishes were cooked in the red ashes about the central fire. As to the cooking, I had resolved to make the slightest demands upon it, and therefore had no disappointments; but my French friends, who are accustomed to a good déjeuner at even a humble inn in their own agreeable land, are pathetic in their lamentations over the Andorran cuisine.

"*Et quel déjeuner, juste ciel,*" *writes one,* "*à l'auberge du lieu ! C'est le combat des* voraces *et des* coriaces. *Avec un épais vin rouge, âpre comme une râpe, nous faisons couler de force une sorte de cuir bouilli auquel on ne peut attribuer de nom, suivi d'une platée de pommes de terre à l'ail, je veux dire d'ail aux pommes de terre. Comme dessert, des amandes grillées et des copeaux qui sont, paraît-il, des languettes de pêche desséchées. . . . Si j'insiste sur ce menu, c'est que hélas ! . . .* ab uno disce omnes. *Celui-là peut servir de prototype pour juger de la cuisine andorrane, aussi exécrable qu'elle est cordialement offerte. . . . Mais il y a des moments où l'on préférarait le flegme insolent d'un maître d'hôtel suisse.*"

So we sat over this rude hearth-fire, 'Cisco, the muleteer, warming his hands at one end, the proprietor of the inn, a patriarch of over seventy, seated beside him. His wife, a very ancient dame with the wrinkled witch-like face of an old Irishwoman, peeled the potatoes, while she kept moving the faggots up to the centre as their ends burnt off. The big chimney with its hanging chains was black as night with

soot. The married daughter of the house went to and fro, while an iron-faced maid did the heavy work. From time to time a shepherd from the hills, a muleteer, or a traveller bound for Porté or Andorra, would enter, and seat him at the fire and call for food and wine. I sat in the company very well satisfied, for the hearth was warm, and the people were good enough to treat me exactly as one of themselves. That is, after all, the acme of hospitality from Prince or peasant. All became radiant when, in the course of talk, I said anything complimentary about Andorra, for they love their country and are very proud of it. That the stranger should find its mountains wonderful, its valleys green and lovely, its flowers like those of his own land, was testimony indeed.

As to Soldeu, it is a village by the wayside, of rude dark houses roughly built of schist from the adjoining mountain-slope, with slate roofs of a still more sombre hue. It has the same grim, burnt-up look as every other village in this hard country, and there is little in it to tempt the eye or encourage exploration. I walked up the main street to visit the telegraphist, whom I had met on the road walking towards France at a great rate.

"Good-day to you, sir," I had said; "you are walking very fast!"

"That's true," he replied, "it's good for the liver;" and he clapped his hand to his side.

He was a bright, cheery little man, and his devotion to exercise for its own sake gave him individuality in this Spanish land.

When I climbed up to his minute bureau, in which there was barely room for us both, he received me with a hospitable condescension.

"I pray you," he said, "keep yourself covered, and regard this house as your own, without ceremony."

I showed him my card of introduction from M. Charles Romeu, commending me to all functionaries in Andorra.

"Ah!" he said, "a great man."

"The King of Andorra!"

"There is none like him."

And with this he bowed to the card, placed his hand on

his heart, and with evident and rising enjoyment mouthed the titles inscribed upon it :

CHEVALIER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR !
VIGUIER OF ANDORRA !!
MONSIEUR CHARLES ROMEU !!!

This man, you could see, had a natural affinity with the great. He felt warmed and exalted by their presence, even in the guise of a visiting-card. His face glowed with the sort of internal emotion that inspires a good English butler when he speaks of " His Grace " or " His Lordship."

" Sir," he said, handing me back my card with a solicitous flourish, " you have but to command me—a friend of Monsieur Romeu."

We had some agreeable conversation.

" What," he said, " would we Andorrans do without France ! My salary, for instance, is paid me by the French Government. That wire that you see outside running up the valley was erected at French expense. I have but to touch the instrument, and, behold, I am in contact with Paris ! So with the post ; and, what's more, we get our letters carried free."

" The railway ? Ah, what a wonderful thing ! It will be a great day when the International Railway is completed. Then we Andorrans, we shall enjoy it ; we shall know it is there, rushing along—puff ! puff !—in at one tunnel, out at another, while We within our frontiers fold our arms and live in tranquillity and repose." And with this he folded his arms with a luxurious gesture, and sank snugly into his chair.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALIRA DEL ORIENTE

VALLEY OF ANDORRA, VILLAGE OF ORDINO

BEFORE leaving Soldeu the next morning, I entered the kitchen to bid adieu to my friends. I have already described its dark and massive chimney with its hanging chains, and the company that gathered round it. To these there were now added a fresh and portly man, in a black smock and a white straw hat, standing with his legs apart before the fire. He had the healthy air and colour of an English farmer, and a look of prosperity lay upon his countenance and in the ample folds of his smock and the row of shining buttons with which it was bedecked. Before him on the spacious hearth stood on end, baking for his breakfast, a single egg. It looked a comic meal for so imposing a figure. He stood and talked, 'Cisco and the innkeeper joining in with sententious phrases, and I concluded that he was some prosperous cattle-dealer on his way over into France. It was not till we were halfway down the valley that I knew, from a chance remark of the worthy 'Cisco's, that I had met the Syndic and Procureur-General of the valleys of Andorra, the President of this ancient republic. I wished that I could have looked upon Jove in his panoplies, his cloak of office and his gold-laced three-cornered hat, and seen him preside at a Council of State; but, alas! his face was turned towards France, as mine was down the valley on the road to Spain.

I had found the inn at Soldeu exceed all expectations, and had been kindly treated by its people; but I was glad to get

out of the village and once more into the clean air and immaculate verdure of the fields, for by no stretching of courtesy or forbearance can one call the Andorrans other than an extremely dirty people.

The sky was blue overhead, no wisp of cloud anywhere, and the sun glowed with a hard brilliance that was the antithesis of yesterday. At Soldeu all that there is of a road abruptly ends, and one drops back a thousand years to a primitive mule-track, which in places is nothing more than the plain surface of the rock. The track descends, yielding a diminishing view of the Andorran heights, till at the junction of the Valira with the River Inclès it opens out suddenly up this tributary valley, and one's eyes are carried up the silver streak of water to the high grassy Col, flanked by black and towering peaks, where it ends. This is a beautiful sight. High up there is the pool of "the silver water," the Font Argente, which marks the limits of Andorra.

Hence the mule-path follows the descending Valley of the Valira, now up, now down, now along the levels, always full of charm and incident. The prime note, as always in a valley journey, is struck by the river, which passes through grassy meadows bright with the flowers of our English gardens —with freesias and pansies and forget-me-nots—amidst exuberant cornfields, and through wild and wooded defiles, where the great firs come down from their high mountain homes to its very edge and lean across its foaming waters.

This is the immemorial highway, unchanged since the days of Charlemagne; and the life that moves along it is the life of Andorra. One passes the women labouring in the potato-fields—a plain unbeautiful race; the children playing by the wayside; the shepherd in his red Catalan cap, with his flock tinkling about him; the man on a journey, with his hobnailed boots strung over his shoulder, and light canvas *espadrilles* upon his feet; the Spanish *Curé* in his too-elegant soutane and black beaver hat; the field-labourer behind his ass, carrying earth from the river to some stony field high up on the mountain-side; the muleteer with his gaily-caparisoned beast, bright with red and yellow woollen balls and brass and coloured metal-work, the most picturesque—the only picturesque—creature on the road.

SANTA COLOMA, ANDORRA (*page* 295)

ST. PAUL DE FENOUILLET (*page* 322)

One passes rude hamlets with little chapels which stand for the earliest alphabet of Christian architecture, and date back almost to the passing of the Arab from these lands; sombre villages, black and iron-grey, the abodes of poverty; shrines by the wayside to Our Lady, "*nostra Senyora del Meritxell*," Patroness-General of the Andorran valleys; granite crosses of ancient days, more beautifully wrought than any work of recent years, with Christ upon His cross on one side, the Virgin and Babe upon the other. (It is surely to the cult of the Virgin-Mother that Europe owes some of her special regard for women?) These crosses stand upon some commanding rock by the wayside, *svelte* and human in their amphitheatres of gaunt towering mountains.

At St. Jean the Old one comes upon the first chapel with a tower and any pretensions to architecture. It stands upon a grassy precipitous rock overlooking the foaming river, its rude but elegant campanile sharply outlined against the chaos of Nature. It has a deep wooden veranda about two sides of it, much like a little Hindu temple in Kumaon. The door of the chapel is locked, but through a window one can see the painted and illuminated screen behind the altar, glowing with colour in the gloom. A little farther, and one comes to Canillo, under the precipitous flanks of Casamanya, a village of some size, with a white church and tall campanile, some poplars, an old seigneurial dovecot and battered tower, and the customary string of sombre houses with wooden balconies facing the sun.

Here and henceforth one is without the beautiful view of the snow-topped mountains and the high upland valleys which graced the earlier hours of the Valira; for the road has already dropped several thousand feet from the moment it crossed the Pass of the Emballira. The river runs furiously at the bottom of a narrow valley, and the grim mountains rise sharply above it on either hand, dark and wooded at their summits, with slips and patches of corn lower down, telling their tale of man's slavery to toil. Here have these people generation after generation lived out their hard lives, bearing upon the pitiful faces of their old women, the plain flat forms and features of their young daughters, the

dry and wrinkled physiognomy of their men, the marks of a life that seems little better than that of their beasts.

Andorra, I tell myself, is an example of what a peasantry left to itself can achieve. These people are redeemed by their spirit of independence, by their love for this, their own fraction of the earth; otherwise there is little about them that is attractive. The world would be a miserable place if it were all peopled by Andorrans. The country in some of its aspects is superbly beautiful; its inhabitants are of small account. They have accomplished nothing, they have no history, no great memories; unpicturesque to look at, they have moved forward but little in ten centuries. What profit is there in such independence? This is no idyllic peasantry, children of Hellas and of light, but just the rude Catalan in his primitive state.

After Canillo the valley opens out a little at Encamps, and the river makes a wide sweeping curve through poplar avenues, under an old baronial tower and chapel outstanding upon a projecting rock. At Encamps there are white-washed houses, which look encouraging from afar, and the innkeeper says it is a civilized place. You can take your Pernod here and speak French if you like; but the inn, in spite of its white face, is as filthy as at Porté, and less homely than that of Soldeu.

The day was hot, the sun beating fiercely down upon the mountain-slopes. I went from the inn with my lunch to some willow-trees by the river, and passed the hot slumberous hours beside it, listening to its rough music as it foamed and rushed over its rocky bed. When it was time to set out again, I came back to the inn to find 'Cisco asleep, Chatto the mule taking his ease in a big dark stable unvisited by flies, and the market-place so crowded with sheep that there was no room to pass. There they lay, dusty and wayworn, with heaving flanks and heads seeking shelter behind each other from the sun. Inside the inn at the long bare tables, the shepherds were seated drinking wine, their faces seamed with weather and hard toil. The humble maid of the inn, a meagre child of sixteen, with a coil of Venetian hair, was ministering to their wants, while the mistress of the house sat humbly peeling

potatoes before the dark grimy hearth. The proprietor, with his civilized air and white, treacherous face, talked politics, and seemed to favour the union of the valleys with France.

Upon the dirty walls there was one solitary picture, the only concession of Encamps to art.

It was a picture in which British troops were being shot down like rabbits by a party of flamboyant Boers.

I felt that I had seen enough of Encamps and its civilization.

"'Cisco," I called from the balcony, "is the mule ready?"

"Si, mounseer, the saddle on his back and he awaits you."

And with that I rode away into the hot white sunlight, leaving Encamps, perhaps for ever, behind me.

Never in Europe have I known a hotter sun, and I was glad to get into the shelter of Escaldas and put my head under the village pump. Escaldas is the Vernet-les-Bains of Andorra, a place of sulphur springs, the haunt of the rheumatic seeker after health. I had heard of the Établissement, and had pictured something exceptional for the little republic. But it is a humble place, owned by the doctor who exploits the waters; while his wife, good honest lady, does the cooking and waits in the café. It is a shade better and larger than the Andorran inn, and is exempt from the odours of Soldeu. Had it been open, I should have lodged here for the night, but the doctor was away and the "season" had not yet begun. We sat here however, for a space, over a cup of coffee, while the worthy 'Cisco retailed and collected the news, and made fine compliments to the doctor's lady, to which she replied: "Oh, but you are too civil, senhor; you know that I am no longer young."

In the cool of the soft June evening, as the deep violet shadows were falling in massive lines down the valley, we came into Andorra the Old, the capital of the republic. One might expect some outward signs of state, some manifest hint of its dignity, on entering; but, in truth, the capital is little more than the rest of the villages which people these secluded valleys. It stands on a high shelf above the river, which is here joined by its main affluent, the Valira del Norte. The northern stream, descending past

Ordino and La Massana, enters through a beautiful wooded gorge under an old grey bridge which marks the threshold of the capital.

A tobacco factory, whose wheels are turned by the bright sparkling waters, stands by the highway inviting the interest of the traveller. Here the tobacco that is grown in the southern valley is prepared for export, and the entire business is one of contraband. When ready to be fastened on the back of the *contrebandier*, the cords are so arranged that by one slight pull the whole packet can be dropped in an instant. It is hazardous work, for the French and Spanish guards on the frontier keep a watchful eye on smugglers, and every year a dozen worthy citizens of the republic languish in French gaols, while others pay a heavy fine to the revenues of Spain. Within his own borders the Andorran *contrebandier* moves unabashed, and even a meeting on the way with the Viguier of France brings no blush to his cheek or discomfort to his mind. But once upon the frontier, he can travel only by the hardest routes, and at night, and at inclement seasons. The instant he is perceived, away goes his precious burden over the sharp declivities, down, down, to the bottom of the grey misty valley, 65 pounds of the best Andorran weed! But not always. There are times when the heavy hand of the douanier falls upon the burdened smuggler out of the dark. A brief struggle, and he is carried off ignominiously, this free and independent citizen, to a court of justice and a gaol. The profits are, of course, enormous, there being a margin of 350 per cent. between the price at the factory and that at which tobacco is sold in France.

Hard by this factory there is one of wax matches, in which three women are employed at a wage of 1½ pesetas a day. How quickly their fingers work, with the lightning speed of a good compositor! These matches also go into France to compete, by their comparative excellence, with the shameless output of the State, the *manufacture de l'État*, which is a synonym in France for that which is unutterably bad. They remind one how curiously nationalities differ. For the Frenchman, with his republican notions and his devotion to theory, wonders how it is that we continue to

endure a King; while the Englishman, with his practical sense, finds it hard to understand how the Frenchman contrives to endure the tyranny of his match!

At Andorra there is some choice of inns, the celebrated Pépi, to whom all travellers used to go, having retired from business. Here is a picture of Pépi and his inn, recorded by a French visitor:

"*Dans une rouelle sombre, au seuil d'une humble* posada *un petit homme chafouin est là, qui nous attend et nous fait l'accueil le plus empressé. C'est l'illustre Señor José Molès, dit Pépi, qui figure modestement la Providence à Andorre, non seulement pour les voyageurs, mais encore pour tous les gens en mal de procès, car il cumule la profession d'aubergiste avec celle de* procurador, *quelque chose comme 'avoué,' ne vous en déplaise.*"

I found the worthy Pépi at his door in the narrow unkempt street, and entered, at his hospitable invitation, to drink a cup of poor coffee under his roof.

"Yes, senhor," he said, "I am the illustrious Pépi of whom you have heard. My name is known throughout France by generations of travellers who have lodged with me here in Andorra, but since the death of my wife I have given up innkeeping. What can an old man do single-handed? But you see that I still keep a café, and am wholly at your service. Contraband? Ah yes! How should we poor fellows do without contraband? But it is a hard profession, and we always have some of our people shut up in French and Spanish gaols. No, no one is ever shot; but in Spain they fine. Very occasionally," he murmurs reflectively, "one can bribe a Spanish douanier, but in France, never."

I left the little, yellow, wrinkled man, whose name you will find quoted as that of an authority in such monumental works as Monsieur Brutail's "La Coutume d'Andorre," and found shelter for the night at the principal inn.

The proprietor here was a Spaniard, with a stubble of a week, a dark, large-eyed, and dirty man. His wife, a daughter of Andorra, does the cooking with a reasonable care and efficiency. The Spaniard waits at table after a manner of his own. He enters in his loose slippers, with a serviette thrown over one shoulder, and makes directly for

the wine-flask on the table. Lifting his face to the ceiling, he lets the little red jet gurgle down his throat. He then draws a chair and joins in the talk, or rolls a cigarette, which he smokes complacently in the faces of his guests. When I am alone his conversation fails him, for I am sure that we have no language in common. He sits facing me, his elbows on the table, his face in his hands, staring at me out of his big animal eyes as if I had dropped upon his world from some other planet. Altogether an unattractive person.

On the ground floor of the inn there is a shop in which he attends to customers. The bedrooms are upstairs, and mine was quite tolerably clean. But for the best inn in Andorra the Posada —— is a poor place, and one is glad when there to get away from it out into the fields and open country. Next door to it is the telegraph-office, managed by a busy capable Frenchwoman, whose children have been to Paris, and talk their mother's tongue with an accent that falls gratefully upon one's ears after the desperate French of the valleys.

The nights were very perfect during my stay in Andorra, the sky so blue, and the stars glowed vividly in the lane overhead between the double line of high serrated mountains. But the June dawn comes early, and with it the voices of the muleteers and of all those who go out to labour in the fields.

CHAPTER V

ANDORRA-LA-VIEJA

AN ANDORRAN FARM

And so here was the 22nd of June, and while our Babylon was stirred to her heart by a mighty pageant, and a King-Emperor rode by in his gilded coach, escorted by the Princes of Europe and the great men of an Empire upon which the sun has not yet set, I sat at peace in a hayfield in poor Andorra, and watched the evening slowly closing in over the valley.

Here, as throughout this primitive country, one passes in a moment from the filth and squalor of a rude village into scenes of rural beauty, the air scented with the aroma of new-mown hay and of dog-roses in bloom. The valley is sufficiently wide to yield a sense of plenty and repose ; the river murmurs through it without impediment, lined with willows, and in a beautiful setting of meadows and cornfields, tall poplars and wide-spreading oaks and chestnuts; the little village of Escaldas at one end of the valley, Andorra on a height at the other.

The reapers were busy with their long sweeping scythes, and the hay lay in swathes about them, in tribute to their day's toil. The sun was just sinking behind the high serrated peak of Anclar, which hangs frowning over Andorra; but the valley was still lit in places with his rays, while throughout there was the pervading sense of a soft evening glow, bringing with it the incomparable peace of a summer day at its close.

How remote and far from the outlying world is this quiet

valley, which from time immemorial has lived its own secluded life! Even yet, and for a little longer space, it is linked with Europe by no wheeled highway, and one realizes that its people are of this soil, and of this alone. I suppose that nearly every Andorran can say with confidence that his ancestors have been here, in one or other of these little valleys, since the beginning of recorded history—as much a part of them as the river and the mountains and the trees. It is a bond that must tie their hearts in a way difficult for a stranger to understand.

From the hayfield by the river I climbed up a rough mountain-road, which was a perfect torrent of stone, until I got amidst the ilex-woods, where was a dead silence and no hint of life.

They are very beautiful, these ilex-woods, with their rough black trunks and their shining foliage, which at this season is of various shades of green. Through their branches and over their feathery summits one has wonderful views of the valley and its mountains, and Andorra clustering grey below, with its two campaniles of Church and State. The sun, which had long since left the valley, suddenly returned and sent a soft flood of light across to the high chapel and the upland lake of Andorra, left here by the glacier of the Valira in times infinitely remote. The rough mountain-road suddenly turned to a soft footpath along a canal, and became bordered with marguerites and honeysuckle. The canal, the very colour of the ilexes, moved swiftly and silently along, the only live creature in a still world, bearing its wonderful evidence to the simple elemental laws which regulate our universe. It runs gradually down the valley at a high level above Andorra, between it and the mighty mountain-slope of Anclar, which towers above it so sheer and steep that one wonders its loose torrents of shale do not fall upon and bury the ancient capital of the republic. Its walls seem at a little distance to be almost perpendicular, and as one looks up from the Casa del Vall the browsing sheep, and the shepherd following after them, look like flies upon a ceiling.

SEO D'URGELL (*page* 298)

SEO D'URGELL (*page* 298)

The sights and scenes about Andorra are those of a humble countryside, and the people are a poor and hard-driven peasantry, with little surplus for the joys of life. The women are flat-chested and plain of feature, and look underfed and overworked and driven. One does not meet here the bright, good-looking Catalan girl, with her trim and swaying figure, her neat hair, and her *joie de vivre*. These people are harder put to it and more austere, and yet they are likeable for their simple, honest, and decent ways. As I strolled quietly back into Andorra, I came upon an old woman seated at the foot of a granite cross feeding her pigs, the evening soft about her, and a look of patient and humble resignation upon her face. Millet might have painted her. A Balearic beggar met me and begged a sou, and was glad and glib and unashamed. The Andorran is too proud and self-reliant to beg. A labourer walked with me and spoke of his life. The valley, he admitted, was beautiful in summer, "but in winter, Senhor, it is cold and there is little to do, and many of us are obliged to leave our homes and get a living in Barcelona or Béziers. At this season I earn 2½ pesetas a day."

Nearer Andorra the lanes were crowded with donkeys coming home, so laden with hay as to be almost invisible; and with mules and ponies from Spain, burdened with wine-skins which looked like sacks of corn, kegs of brandy, and all the various requirements of a community which manufactures nothing but tobacco, and is dependent even for some of its food upon larger centres accessible only to pack animals.

I paid a visit to the worthy 'Cisco at home. His wife, a homely soul, rotund by comparison with the lean muleteer, received me in the kitchen, in which she was busy preparing the dinner. Upon the dark and sombre hearth was the gipsy kettle of Andorra, hung from chains, and a wood fire burned slowly beneath it. At the other end was a window, with a view from it over fields and mountains; and a table, upon which some *rancio* was set for my entertainment. Below the floor I could hear the grunting of the family pig. Upstairs there were bedrooms, colour-washed and clean, to which 'Cisco was adding balconies and furniture for the enter-

tainment of travellers. It was understood that upon my next visit to Andorra I should stay at the inn he hopes to establish. He is so popular and travelled a person that one might as well stay with him as with anyone else in Andorra. 'Cisco has a family of two sons and two daughters, who were duly presented. The sons, like their father, will take to the road in the fulness of time, driving their mules and ponies into Seo d'Urgell, or, it may be, piloting an auto-bus to the episcopal city, for great changes are in store for the republic. The daughters can scarcely hope for a life less burdened with toil than that of their sisters of the valley. Even as children they reflect in their faces the hard destiny of the Andorran woman.

Endurance here, as in Spain, is the prime quality of the people. When I telegraphed from Porté to 'Cisco de Sans to come up and join me there with his mule, he was halfway on the road from Urgell, which is five hours' march from Andorra. His wife wired back that he would be with me the following morning. Now, Porté is ten hours' march from Andorra. I met him at the border, and he returned with me immediately to Soldeu. He had thus, since he left Urgell the previous morning, been on the march for twelve hours along high mountain-roads. He had scarcely settled down before the hearth of the inn at Soldeu, when he discovered the loss of an article of my baggage on the road. He was visibly tired, and had reached that blissful stage of repose that is the reward of a man who has made a long journey, and now has his boots off, a cigarette in his mouth, a glowing fire before him, and dinner nearly ready; but without a moment's hesitation he was out of the inn and back upon the road, laboriously tracing his way in search of the missing article, high up on the steep slopes of the Col of the Emballira. Two hours passed before he came back exhausted, but with his reputation as the best muleteer in Andorra intact.

When his day's work is over, and the evening meal is accomplished, he retires to the café of El Pépi, and there plays cards and smokes an endless succession of cigarettes until far towards midnight. Yet he is early astir. I have heard him in the dawn, when birds first begin to cheep,

already at work in the stable expostulating with his mule Chatto. His tone is of partnership, as of one citizen of a republic addressing another. Chatto is an ally, and no mule or mere beast of burden. There is the bond of the road between them—the memory of many an early start, of many a long day and late return home, of sunshine and foul weather; and man and beast are indissolubly bound to each other.

Of Andorra itself there would not be much to be said were it not the capital of the valleys, the hearth of their independence. Like any other Andorran village, it is squalid and dirty; its streets are rude and soiled with offal, its people primitive in their ideas of decency. It is not even the richest commune in the republic, and it is fifth only in order of precedence of the six parishes of the nation. But it is the capital, and it is the seat of one of the most curious governments in the world. Here is the historic Casa de la Vall, which is a fortress, a senate-house, a dormitory, a refectory, a chapel, a school, a stable, and a dove-cote, in one. The twenty-four Councillors-General, who bear the prefix "Illustrious," meet here in session, under the presidency of the Syndic-Procureur-General, who is the Head of the State. They meet five times a year, but any citizen may summon a special meeting of the Andorran Parliament on payment of 80 pesetas (say £3), and even a foreigner can attain this distinction by putting down a sum sufficient to meet expenses, including a fee of 3 pesetas a day to each of the Councillors.

The Casa de la Vall is a rude and sombre building, hard by the summit of the Rock of Andorra; and though the site is ancient, the house dates only to the year 1588, which is inscribed upon its lintel. One might pass it by unnoticed but for its belfry and its loopholed watch-tower, projecting at one angle of the wall. Over its main door are sculptured in stone the arms of the State, bearing the cross and mitre of the Bishop of Urgell, the bulls of Bearn, and the palings of Foix and Catalonia—an epitome of its history. Two Latin inscriptions lend even this humble Parliament-house the dignity of Rome.

"*Domus concilii, Justitiæ sedes.*"

"*Suspice: sunt vallis neutrius stemmata; sunt que*
Regna quibus gaudent nobiliora tegi,
Singula si populos alios, Andorra, bearunt
Quidni juncta ferent aurea secla tibi."

They define exactly the political constitution of this singular little country, which is neither republic nor subject State, but an alliance of two mountain valleys which govern themselves under the protection and suzerainty of powerful and rival States.

One enters to find one's self in Spain, for here upon the very threshold are the stables in which the Syndic and his Councillors lodge their beasts when they meet for session. A rough wooden staircase ascends to the first floor, where are the various rooms of the house. The first is the school-room, with scenes from the Bible frescoed on its walls, the figures wearing the costumes of the sixteenth century. Here the lame schoolmaster shepherds his small flock, the youngest of whom is his own child of three. He holds the keys, also, of the Council-chamber and acts as cicerone. In the adjoining room, which is used as a refectory by the Council of State, I found the Parish Councillors seated about a bare table, debating with firmness and gravity, as men accustomed to the expression of their views, some infinitesimal matter connected with the civic life of this village of 500 souls. The Secretary was reading from some minutes written in a thin paper-bound volume. Above them, on the wall, was a picture of the crucified Christ. The room might have served as the hall of a monastery in a rude and primitive age, before architecture had come to beautify, or wealth to soften, the austerities of monastic life.

The Council-chamber adjoins this room in which the Councillors feed. You feel on entering it that you have reached the arcana of Andorra. Upon its walls hang like ghosts the cloaks and three-cornered hats of the Illustrious which they don when in Council assembled, and into the wall there is fastened the famous safe which enshrines the laws and the customs and the archives of Andorra. So jealously is it guarded that it has six separate locks, one for each of the parishes of which the nation is composed, and its keys

remain in the separate charge of each one of the Councillors, so that without their joint concurrence access to it is impossible. One can see the name of each parish inscribed in order of precedence opposite its lock—Canillo, Encamps, Ordino, La Massana, Andorra-la-Vieja, and San Julia de Loria. To such minute subdivision can the business of a country descend! When one has taken even a modest share in the government of three hundred million people, these things are of a stupefying interest.

For the rest, there is a table with an old green cloth upon it, a stove, a window opening on the valley, and twenty-six rush-bottomed chairs for the Syndic, the Deputy-Syndic, and their illustrious colleagues.

Before the Councillors meet for session, they attend Divine service in the adjoining chapel dedicated to St. Armengol, that famous Bishop and Gothic Count who built the Cathedral of Urgell and was drowned in the rushing River Segre.

A painting of the pilgrims of Emmaus, presented by Félix Faure, reminds one that the President of the French Republic, as heir of Henri Quatre, is one of the two Sovereign Lords of Andorra. Surely the world is full of contradictions.

The kitchen of the mansion is as rude and mediæval as the rest of this singular abode. It consists of an immense square chimney which descends like a cowl from the centre of the room, and covers the greater part of the slabbed floor. Its great jack and sooty iron chains look like instruments of torture rather than of good cheer. But doubtless upon some wintry day in bygone years, when an ox was roasted whole here over the glowing embers (if the frugal State ever ran to so lavish a festival), and the illustrious ones came in in their robes and three-cornered beavers to warm their hands and whet their appetites before it, it must have looked cheery and comforting enough. Upstairs there is the dormitory in which they sleep when the kindly approach of night gives them respite from their monumental labours.

The whole house is primitive and elementary to a wonderful degree. One might laugh at it, were it not that the hearts of its people are tied to it as the symbol of their patriotism. For the Casa de la Vall is the Westminster of Andorra, and,

unlike so many representative institutions based upon that famous model, it is a genuine thing, sprung from the soil, with its roots far back in the history of the Catalan race. It expresses the sentiment, surviving here in its pristine form, that inspired the old Cortes of Aragon and Spain before Philip II. dictated its policy — the passionate desire for self-government, which throughout their history has made the Catalans tenacious of their rights, which converted half of them from Spanish subjects into loyal Frenchmen, and still finds an angry expression in the bombs and the fury of Barcelona. When the Spanish Crown has learnt how to conciliate Catalan feeling instead of repressing it, we shall hear no more of a Spanish Republic. This is the message it seems to convey, and this is the task that awaits King Alphonso and the child of half-English blood who is his destined successor.

The Andorran is not popular with his neighbours over the border. They will tell you he is grasping and avaricious and distrustful, at which they will make a wry face and blow out their lips to show you exactly what they mean. I believe I discovered this expression even upon the friendly countenance of the Viguier of Andorra, when he discussed with me the details of my journey. But this was not my experience; possibly because I carried his card of introduction. I have no wish to settle in Andorra, amidst its dirty streets and squalid habitations. Yet I liked this people. They seemed to me to have an honest and friendly air. I saw no gendarmes or police, or any display of authority in any form. No tax-gatherer met me upon the threshold of the land; no carabinero came to finger my possessions and question my right to photograph a cornfield. I felt instinctively that I was in a free country, like my own, and that I could do as I pleased.

As to the manners of the Andorrans, I found, it is true, no straining after cordiality such as I had noticed amongst the Catalans across the border, no swagger or loud talk. These people were grave and quiet and simple, and always willing, as it seemed to me, to oblige. They worked hard; man, woman, and child—too hard for the beauty of the race. But they had their sociable hours. In the evening, after the long

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day's toil, I found them at the cafés playing cards and conversing together, and even their hard life has not extinguished the Catalan love of dancing. The jongleurs play their flutes and their hautboys here in the village *plaza*, as they do elsewhere throughout Catalonia; and the young men and the maidens dance together, but with less of joy and less of pagan contentment.

For the Andorrans are a religious people. The Church still wields her powerful sway in the valleys, the *Curé* is still a force in the land, and one of the overlords of Andorra is a Spanish Bishop, even sometimes a Cardinal of Rome. The civil marriage is unknown in the country, and illegitimacy, in spite of the hot Catalan blood, is rare. When a child is born out of wedlock, it is hastily carried through the night from village to village, till it has passed beyond the Puritan frontier. The mother, should her heart yearn after her offspring, is obliged to leave the country, to which she is almost as deeply attached.

"I shall never forget," writes Monsieur Brutails, "the moving story told us one day by two old Andorrans of a tragic affair which had involved the murder of a woman. 'She was beautiful,' said one of them with enthusiasm, 'as she was good.' And he stopped for a moment in the midst of his narrative. We were standing upon a rock which dominated the rude valley, the eternal murmur of the streams which make the Valira in our ears. We felt carried back into some bygone century, far from theatres and boulevards, very far from the impious sarcasms which ridicule the honour of marriage and kill the strongest races—"*qui tuent les peuples les plus forts.*" A Frenchman's view perhaps; but descriptive of Andorra, which like Ireland is a faithful daughter of the Church.

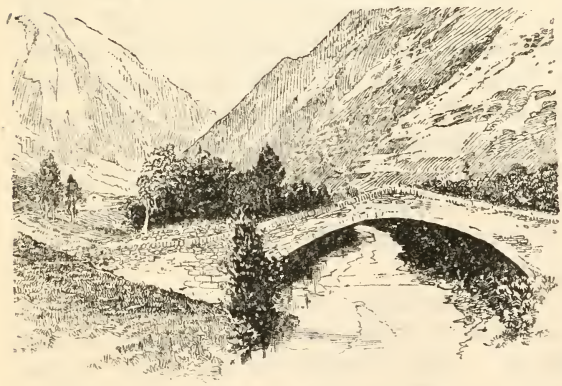
In the *plaza* of Andorra there are a few buildings which stand out by their size or character from the rest of this primitive settlement. One of these is the State Prison, which bears testimony by its humble proportions to the law-abiding character of the people; and another is the rose-coloured mansion of the *Curé*, next door to the dark and grim old church. Opposite there is the principal, in fact the only, shop in Andorra, the property of Hyacinth Rossell,

the universal provider of the State. Here one may purchase whatsoever of the outer world ever finds its way into the capital; one may even change a banknote or cash a cheque. Senhor Rossell has cosmopolitan leanings, and knows his Paris pretty nearly as well as he knows his Andorra.

But the finest house of all stands up at the far end of the square, taking up the whole of one of its sides. It is a noble building, with high white pillars and dark overhanging roof, and a splendid balcony set about with great pots full of vivid carnations. Upon its coloured walls there is the date 1809. It would suit an enterprising American who wished to settle down in Andorra and become the citizen by adoption of a republic older and sterner than his own. Its garden is enclosed in an old grey granite wall that is overladen with the wild-brier and scented with its blossoms in June. While before it there is a glittering pool in which the daughters of Andorra do their washing. This is the only charming corner in this rude capital—the humblest and the poorest in Europe.

CHAPTER VI

LEAVING ANDORRA



BRIDGE OVER THE VALIRA, NEAR SANTA COLOMA

I WAS so charmed with the solemn ilex-woods, the scented hay-fields of Andorra, the music of the scythe as it mingled on these June evenings with the deeper voice of the Valira hastening on its way, the sights and scenes of a beautiful country-side, that I would have stayed another day for the pleasure

of their intimate companionship; but when I woke in the morning to the sounds of the muleteers getting ready for the road, the innkeeper flinging his door open to the world, the sky was grey and overcast, offering little promise of such a summer day as I had looked for. On the other hand, these soft grey days are the best for a long journey in June, so far in the South of Europe; so I sent for 'Cisco to say that we would start. Meanwhile I paid a visit to Chatto the mule, and found him lying at ease in his dark stable on the soft litter, with plenty of good hay in the trough before him. "Chat-to!" I called out in the best imitation of his master's voice; "Chatto!" I said persuasively, whereupon he pricked up his long maternal ears and rose nimbly to his feet; but, finding I had no other purpose in my visit than to greet him, he set to work like a sensible animal on the hay before him. While 'Cisco was getting him ready, I climbed up to the Council Rock, which overhangs the Casa de la Vall, and looked out across the valley. I could not but see from here how rude and poor a building is the senate-house of Andorra, how roughly fashioned and how ill-placed, even for such defensive purposes as its loopholed tower of unmortared stone suggests. A feudal lord would have planted his donjon on the summit of the rock, scornful of the labour involved in levelling the necessary space; but the good peasantry were unequal to this effort, and were content to put their castle under the rock, whence anyone could throw stones at it with impunity. The loopholes and the tower must have been added by way of adornment, for in truth the independence of Andorra is not in the keeping of its citizens. *Regna quibus gaudent nobiliora tegi* is the secret of its persistence, and the illustrious ones are all past-masters in the art of international diplomacy. We met all sorts and conditions of people on the road, and, for the first time since I came to Andorra, a pretty girl after the Catalan type, who happened to be coming from Spain, where she is a schoolmistress. Like everyone else, she had a smile and a handshake for the popular 'Cisco. Her humbler and less fortunate countrywomen were toiling like slaves in the fields about us, planting the young tobacco and digging with hoe and mattock amongst the potatoes. Even the young ones looked

mean and shrivelled, and some of the poor old creatures who toiled with their bony hands were like witches, so blear-eyed and far were they from the beauty of womanhood. If the independence of Andorra can bring it no better fortune than this, one would think its free-born citizens might barter some of their independence for a few more material comforts.

What, after all, I asked myself, is this craving for political isolation, this desire to be free of the bonds that community with large aggregations of men entails? Little more here, it seemed to me, than a sordid illusion, with at its root just that sort of wilfulness which makes people disinclined to face the personal sacrifices essential to corporate life. The Andorran holds fast by his ancient independence, and becomes a hard-driven slave. Citizenship with France would give him a sense of fellowship with a great people, make him a partner in all their great achievements, ease his daily burden, refine his life, open up his country with roads and the appliances of civilization, bring him greater comfort and wealth; and yet he clings like a child to this ancient fetish of independence (you will find it most highly developed in primitive hill communities), and rejoices in his only asset—the freedom from conscription. There is the other view, of course, of a people who have been free and independent for eleven hundred years. The reader can choose for himself.

Coming back to the road, I found men at work upon it, turning it for the first time in Andorran history into a highway for wheeled traffic. The Bishop of Urgell, I was told, was paying the bill. The easy bits were done, the hard passages were going forward slowly or not at all. We take our smooth white roads for granted, and complain, in these days of swift motor traffic, even of little inequalities in their surface; but what human toil and labour, the blood and sweat of men, are given to this task! Some of those who work here are strong and powerful, but even their lives will be shortened by this toil; and many are broken men, aged already and bent, for whom there is no better occupation. One can see that it is hard work for them, driving this road through the inhospitable rock, and the good Bishop's exchequer is none too flush of gold. For many years yet people will go by here on their mules and ponies,

the men with their legs dangling behind their animals' ears, stirrupless and perched upon their goods; the women, if of sufficient consequence, in little wooden scoops of side-saddles ornamented with rows of shining nails.

For some distance after leaving Andorra the valley continues wide and beautiful, with its ilex-woods and spreading walnut-trees, and old high-arched bridges and sanctuaries to Our Lady by the way. Here is the little chapel of Santa Coloma, with its light and graceful tower, an unexpected gem in this land of dark mountains and primitive ways.

Soon the road passes into San Julia de Loria, the last of the Andorran parishes, entering it by a narrow way under a house, and leaving it through a stone gateway which, with a wooden bridge across the river, closes the valley. After this it becomes a rugged and narrow mule-track—"*chemin muletier, fort capricieux*"—with the hard, precipitous mountains shutting it in on either hand; and the scented hayfields and the smiles of June yield for a space to the gloom of a rock-bound valley. Far away upon a crag, perched like an eagle's eyrie, is the hamlet of Juberry, and below it, a thousand feet below, is the rivulet which from time immemorial has marked the borders of Spain and Andorra.

Here, when a new Bishop comes to Urgell, he is met by the Andorran notables and escorted to the capital of the republic. Carbines and pistols are fired into the air, and Monseigneur, with his escort of Spanish infantry, his Canons and priests, and the illustrious ones in their three-cornered hats and robes of ceremony, enters Andorra as its co-sovereign and Feudal Lord.

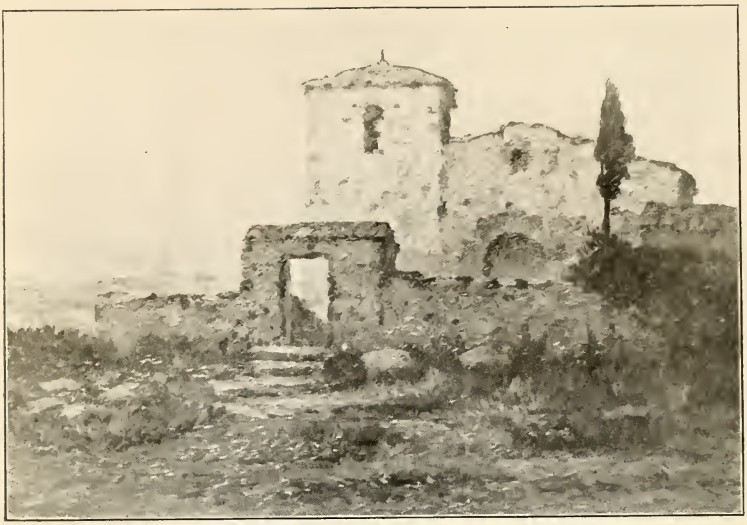
A little farther, and one pays the price of emerging from a land of contraband, in submission to the ignorant and brutal inquisition of the Carabineros of Spain. The one-eyed sergeant spends half an hour in recording the details of one's baggage, and fingering its contents with a half-savage curiosity and a boorish phlegm. Spanish courtesy does not flourish upon these hard frontiers, where the Customs officer carries a loaded rifle and never travels upon his business alone.

This business done, one is at liberty to camp out in the fields, to stretch one's self at noon under the shade of a

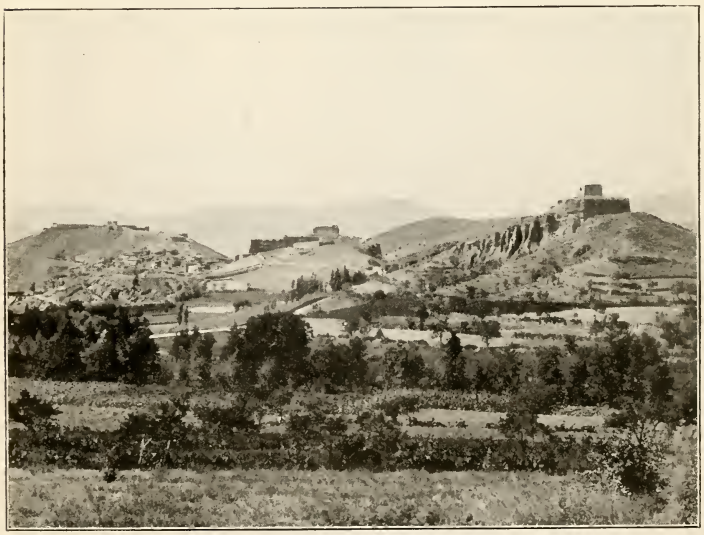
walnut-tree, with one's feet in the corn and slumber upon one's eyes; or to go across to the small auberge at Arcabell, this place of the Carabineros, and take one's seat with the rest of the trafficking world. The inn, though humble, is not unclean; and its inmates, you will find, make quite a tolerable meal off soup and macaroni, and ham and eggs and vegetables, with a gush of wine out of a leather bottle. There is a fireplace here with its heavy cowl and hanging chains, and there are iron chairs, with tables and benches and a bar, and hams and lard suspended from the smoky rafters. Outside there is a wide stone ledge, under the overhanging balcony bright with flowers, and here one can take the sun, and smoke and see the world go by: the long strings of transport mules, the Councillor of Andorra back from a visit to his Bishop-Prince at Urgell, the innkeeper's daughter with her pile of linen to wash in the small canal across the way, the pigs and hens, and the pigeons fluttering from road to roof, from roof to road. Here by the stone ledge the mules are tethered, impatient, restless, vexed by flies, and picturesque with their brass-bound saddlery and red-and-yellow trappings, and badger's-hair flaps in a screen before their eyes. The Carabineros dominate their little Arcabell, idling about it in groups or strolling along the road with an air of mastery—small men in authority in this fractional corner of the round world.

The road, which was bad in Andorra, gets worse in Spain, showing that it is not the Andorran alone who is lacking in enterprise; but here also, at intervals, gangs of road-makers are at work, and it is apparent that a wide carriage-road from Urgell to Andorra is to be looked for before long, if the national exchequer does not run too low. The valley gradually widens, the mountains become less sheer; at Anserall one passes a black old village, grim and dark in contrast with the green fields and returning meadows. Already there is a subtle change which tells one that the road has passed from one country into another.

As the soft summer evening closes in, we come suddenly in view of the citadel of Urgell, glowing high on its peremptory hill, above the rushing waters of the Valira and a golden sea of cornfields, with its air of Spanish pride and



CUADRO DE MODISTO, URGELL



"LAS HORCAS" (THE GALLOWS), URGELL

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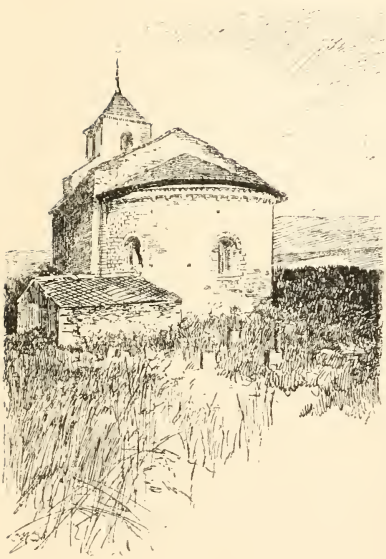
its unmistakable warning that one has passed from out of a little peasant republic into a great fighting State. Behind it rise yet other forts and battlements; the whole valley of the Segre like a small Cerdagne displays before one, with its cathedral towers and its Bishop's palace; and high and majestic against the evening sky soar the splendid masses of the Sierra del Cadi, uplifted nine thousand feet above the sea and veined with silver snow. It is a cheering and lovely prospect, and one's spirit rises from the fatigues of the journey to a contemplation of its significance and beauty. One shakes off, as it were, the oppression of the narrow gorge along which one's path has lain, and rejoices at entering this princely vale.

BOOK IX

THE SEE OF URGELL

CHAPTER I

URGELL AND ITS PRINCE-BISHOP



A WAYSIDE CHURCH

THE air of pride and nobility which Urgell wears as one is approaching her afar off is somewhat lessened by familiarity with her stale and tottering streets, but most of all, perhaps, by that sort of inconsequential and unfinished character which seems peculiar to Spain. Riding down into Urgell from Andorra of a summer evening, with the golden glow on her high fortresses and smiling vale, one feels that one is entering a city both strong and beautiful, the seat for nine hundred years of a Prince of the Church, who still retains his temporal power; and then in a moment one is at a standstill before the door of one's inn, in a street heavy with mud and offal, tailing off at one end into nothing, and at the other into a straggling *plaza*, devoid of character and forlorn.

If this were all there were of Seo d'Urgell, it would be disappointing indeed; but it has, in fact, much that is attractive and definite, and even magnificent, to offer to the eye of the

critical traveller. The centre of its life is the Calle Mayor, which can have changed but little in the last two hundred years, and in its location and origin must be as old as Urgell itself. It is flanked by tall houses of many stories, with iron balconies, and painted walls, and enormous and massive arcades, under which the people walk, sheltering alike from sun and rain. Here are shops and cafés and many mediæval and antique sights, with branching vistas under dark arches down old streets that might have been brought here from Damascus or Stamboul. Here are corn-measures whose granite slabs are black and polished with age, bearing dates of the mid-sixteenth century; here are the wineskins of Don Quixote and the Spanish *botta*, bright trappings for mules, pack-saddles piled high against the sombre walls, and a crippled beggar who goes up and down lying crouched upon his donkey, displaying his maimed limbs to the passing world; priests and soldiers; officers in cloaks; pretty girls arm in arm; and solitary fat old women who, once like them, went laughing down these arcades seized with the joy and the pride of life.

The Calle Mayor sweeps round in a curve, and brings one suddenly face to face with the mighty façade and primitive majesty of the cathedral. Here is something that manifestly bears upon its face the imprint of a long-bygone age. Its force, its sternness, its simplicity, its sincerity and power, instantly and for ever impress one. It is eloquent of armed men, of warriors carrying shields and swords and pennoned lances, of feudal lords and of mighty Bishops, who could, like Otho, the brother of William the Norman, wield a mace in battle and scatter a man's brains, or shrive his soul at will. The great blocks of granite of which it is wrought are black with time, and inside, where narrow stairs climb to its dungeon-like towers, they are polished like marble by the passing of generations of men. Higher up, where the granite has caught the sun, it is of the colour of warm gold, and stored as it were with centuries of light, a beautiful and inspiring sight. Over the great doors and in the cloisters there are carvings which depict the spirit of the age in which this sanctuary was built: lions symbolizing the Spirit of Evil, which go about in the world, outside the

house of God, seeking those whom they may devour; and grinning gargoyles, and devils full of malice and effrontery and spite.

Here is a wolf in flight looking back upon a horseman in pursuit, while behind him a monster with a wolfish face is mangling the bodies of men; here is an armed warrior in a coat of mail, lying in wait for an approaching enemy, while a strange beast is carrying off at full gallop a victim flung over his shoulders; here are spearmen and archers in fantastic guise, and serpents coiled and interwoven in the stones. The front door of the cathedral is barred with iron like a tiger's cage, as though security were still unknown in Urgell, and the sanctuary of God were liable to violent profanation from without.

The cloisters are as rudely majestic as the cathedral itself. The supporting pillars, many of them tottering from age and the immense burden they have sustained so long, are as black as iron. In the centre of the garden rises an elm-tree two hundred years old. It is of superb proportions, high as the cathedral itself, and worthy of its place. The cloisters are perfect in their harmony with the cathedral, and sustain its character.

Built by St. Armengol, Bishop of Urgell and a son of Bernard Taillefer, Count of Besalu, in the early years of the eleventh century, the old Roman cathedral was never finished. The Bishop, like his father, was drowned, and no one has ever been big enough to carry his design to completion. Within, it has been restored in a pitiable manner, its rude old capitals and superb masses of cut stone overlaid with trumpery plaster. The cathedral has two towers, built in the most massive manner of cut stone, but these also were never finished. Pierced here and there with loopholes, dark and forbidding within, they are more like the outworks of a mediæval fortress than a church of God, and plainly reveal the turbulent character of the times in which they were built. Time and again this old fortress-church has fulfilled its purpose of war, and even to this day the beauty of its arched galleries above the apse is marred by masonry walls built hastily during the Carlist wars. The view from these heights, where the great bells of the cathedral hang under the pent-roofs, is of surpassing beauty.

From the painting by L. Bill

THE OLD VILLAGE OF VERNET

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The nave has a groined roof of stone, over which, again, there is a tiled roof, leaving space for men to move about; and in this dark territory, with its loopholes for defence, and protecting outworks for hurling down missiles and molten oil and lead upon the heads of an attacking force, one is purely in a secular and barbaric world, with no hint of the stricken Christ who died to bring peace and good-will amongst men.

Descending the dark dungeon-like stairs, narrow and polished as are the inner chambers of the Pyramids, I walked across the sunlit cloisters, to call upon the Vicar-General, Don Viladrich y Gaspar, who, in the absence of the Bishop, represents the episcopal authority in Urgell. The Vicar-General received me with the generous hospitality of Spain, requesting me to consider his house as my own, and I spent many pleasant hours in his company during my stay in Urgell. He showed me in his chambers a richly embroidered stole from the parish church of Canillo in Andorra. It was a beautiful piece of pictured embroidery, 300 years old, and it was being offered for sale in aid of the parish funds. Together we went back through the cloisters, where the choir-boys were playing leapfrog, and up some dark stairs to the muniment-room, which is one of the wonders of Urgell. Here, in the charge of an old white-haired Canon and scholar, are the precious manuscripts of the cathedral; amongst them, the deed of consecration of the first church in Urgell, after the expulsion of the Moors in 817, and the famous Carta of Andorra, which bears the signatures of Charlemagne and Louis the Debonair. Its authenticity is open to question, but it is none the less a striking and remarkable document.

There is a Bull on papyrus of the Pope Sylvester II., dated in May, 1001, and a wonderful register of deeds known, as the "Liber Dotalium," in two volumes, richly bound and exquisitely written and embellished. Begun in the last years of the twelfth century, it contains copies of a whole series of valuable papers, from the year 819 onwards. Here also, are original deeds bearing the signatures of St. Armengol and St. Odon, and other Bishops of that far-distant time, when Urgell became, perhaps, not for the first

time, an episcopal city; seals of the Counts of Urgell dating back to the year 1223; and fifty-two volumes of manuscript, including a Commentary on the Apocalypse, with pictures and illuminated pages of the ninth century, showing Arab mosques and minarets, with old Irish designs upon its borders, and a Mappa Mundi of the most primitive kind; also a Bible beautified with lovely miniatures and capital letters, which bears the arms of Galceran de Vilanova, Bishop of Urgell in 1415.

This muniment-room, in the charge of the old Canon who has spent his life here, and reads the crabbed and abbreviated Latin as easily as the ordinary man reads his daily paper, is the very haunt of monastic peace. It has but one door, massive and iron-bound, and a great window barred with iron, strong enough to keep out an army. Here in the reflected sunlight which glows without, and which as the day closes comes flooding in in bars across the quiet room, the happy old man passes his days, while outside there glows one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world: the rushing Segre in which St. Armengol lay drowned nine hundred years ago, and the green hills, and the snow-crowned summits of the Sierra del Cadi.

Rain in June is infrequent in Urgell, but it came during my stay there, and for a day or two the streets were pools of mud. Then the sun shone again upon the radiant world, and the clouds piled up in white masses above the mountains, and the Calle Mayor was thronged with citizens. It was market-day, and all the morning, people were coming in upon their mules, and with their flocks of sheep and poultry, and in their country waggons. Many a red and violet Catalan *barretino* gave a vivid note of colour to the animated scene. I walked down the hot brilliant streets, where white awnings were floating from the iron balconies, and entered the cathedral, where High Mass was being celebrated. The congregation was insignificant, for the world was trafficking out of doors; but the service, as usual, offered a superb spectacle, rich with all the glow and ceremonial splendour of the Roman Church. The air within was heavy with incense, visible where the light came streaming in at the high windows;

the Canons were in their stalls; the choir was hung with crimson velvet; the celebrants, in white and gold vestments, stood upon the steps of the high-altar, whose fifteenth-century Gothic screen of gold glowed in the light of the tall wax tapers. The stained-glass Rose above the altar ushered in its vivid harmonies of light; and the great organ filled the church with its music, while the deep voices of the choristers, standing in the central gloom before their immense antiphons, joined in with perfect mastery.

The service being at an end, the Canons came out of the choir, and the Vicar-General stopped in passing to welcome me, and to invite me into the sacristy, where the priests were unrobing. I felt as one who is summoned from the crowd into the society of the elect—of the Fellows, as it were, of this mediæval college. In the centre of the sacristy was a table of vast proportions, with drawers full of old copes and dalmatics, and altar-pieces heavy with gold and silken embroideries, centuries old, and mellowed to exquisite harmonies of colour. All of these were taken out and shown me with a grave courtesy and such hospitable intention as one meets with only in Spain. Upon the polished surface of the great table was a crucifix, with all the vestments I had seen from afar at the just concluded Mass spread out before it. Here also was the gilt chalice the priest had placed to his lips, rich with enamelled medallions, and inscribed with the arms and initials of Galceran de Vilanova, Bishop of Urgell from 1388 to 1415. Beyond the table, filling the whole of one side of the sacristy, was an armoire of even more gigantic proportions, wherein were stored all kinds of other rich and valued possessions; and notably several sceptres with gilt heads and embossed handles of silver, and a reliquary of the sixteenth century embellished with statuettes of the saints Armengol and Odon. The relic is a fragment of the corporal, or fine linen cloth used to cover the chalice and Host, upon which the drops of wine in falling were converted into blood before the very eyes of the priest who doubted in his heart the mystery of the Transubstantiation. There was also here a silver cross of the seventeenth century, which enshrines a fragment of the True Cross.

Here, too, I was shown a clock which has given the time

to the Canons of the cathedral since the eighteenth century, when it first came over the water from England. It bears the name of its maker, John Spence of London.

From the sacristy we passed into the chapel of St. Armengol, where lie the bones of the Bishop and of many of those who followed him in the episcopate of Urgell. The floor of the cathedral is laid with their funeral stones. Above the altar, in the carved and gilded wood, rich with the sumptuousness of Spain, are depicted episodes in the life of the saint, whose death in the rushing waters of the Segre left the cathedral unfinished as it stands to-day. In the side-wall of the choir, as one passes out by the great door which opens on the cloisters, is the little Gothic chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption, built in the fourteenth century, with its effigy in gold of the Virgin lying dead, and its arch of marble, carved into figures of Popes and Bishops, and now black with time. This is the finest piece of work inside the cathedral.

It is always with joy that one passes out from the solemn and almost terrible interiors of these old Spanish churches, into the glow and lucent warmth of their adjoining cloisters, rendered even more than usually attractive here by the great elm and its mass of green. The Vicar-General led me through the cloisters, and across the sunlit square to the Bishop's Palace, and here I entered, as through a magic door, an interior for which the tattered character of this decaying old town had not prepared me. Here was the mansion of a Prince, with its series of noble apartments furnished with splendour and dignity—evidently the home of a man of refinement and taste.

The palace was built by the late Bishop, Cardinal Casanyas, and it fronts the public square, with a noble façade decorated with the arms and hat of the Cardinal. A great door gives entrance into an inner quadrangle, about which the palace is built, like a mediæval college. One enters up a flight of marble stairs designed for ceremonial receptions, and, upon the opening of a door by the janitor within, passes into an ante-room, one side of which is of coloured glass, while the others are hung with modern paintings of the Spanish School. Upon a lectern here is a richly-bound volume in vellum, containing the signatures of the Bishop's admirers. Many

SEO D'URGELL CATHEDRAL (*page* 300)

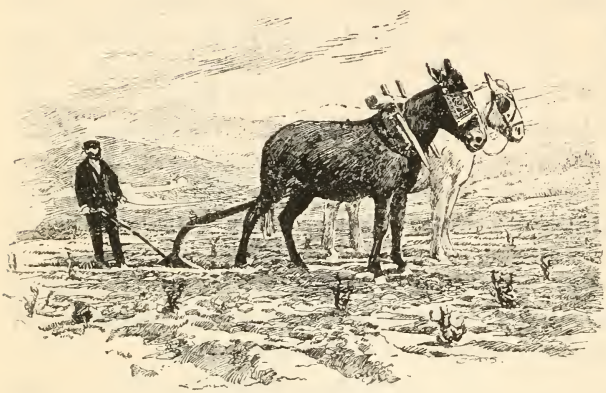
SEO D'URGELL—FROM THE BISHOP'S GARDEN (*page* 305)

of its pages are illuminated, but so poor is the work of the modern illuminator that already the gold is coming off in scales, and the vellum itself is turning yellow. The next room to this is the throne-room, with its daïs and crimson canopy of velvet, and its portraits of the Bishops of Urgell on the walls. The study beyond has a richly moulded roof, more pictures upon its walls, signed portraits of the King and Queen of Spain, and the freedom of many a Spanish city conferred upon the present Bishop. The study, which has all the charm of a room which is much occupied by its owner, leads into the more formal *salon*, with its rich furniture and carpets, and Latin inscription on a frieze of gold: "Cardinal Casanyas, Bishop of Urgell and Prince of Andorra." Next to this is the Bishop's bedroom, like that of Le Roi Soleil at Versailles, heavy with silken hangings and soft under foot—a chamber of ease and comfort.

On the opposite side of the quadrangle there is a long music-room, with signed portraits of Caruso and many other singers and composers. Here the Bishop, who is himself an accomplished musician, entertains his friends during the long winter evenings, when Urgell is more than ever cut off from the outer world. Beyond this room is the dining-room, with its perfect parqueted floor and armoires full of silver and its balcony rich with Moorish tiles, which opens out upon a lovely view looking up the Valley of the Segre. A larger balcony faces the south, yielding passage through a door in it to the most exquisite place of all—the episcopal garden, with its roses and lilies, its trim hedges and tall fir-trees, its pergola of vines, and its ancient white cloisters. From here, too, there is the most lovely view imaginable of the Sierra del Cadi, embattled with white clouds and shining with silver veins of snow. The garden wall stands high above the murmuring Segre, which, coming down as it were directly upon the town, here curves aside on its progress to leave space for Urgell.

CHAPTER II

UP THE VALLEY OF THE SEGRE



PLOUGHING A VINEYARD

It was a grey and cloudy morning the day I left Urgell, setting my face once more towards France, and on my homeward way. The road — a very good one for Spain—lay for a mile or two up the oval plain of Urgell, the cathedral town gaining, like most Spanish cities, in dignity and beauty as one got some distance away from it. The Segre took its undisciplined course, a lawless creature, amidst golden cornfields and orchards and the vineyards which lie along the slopes of the valley. Then it left the smiling plain, which in bygone centuries was a lake of ice, and our path lay along it through the formidable defiles which shut it in between Urgell and Bellver. From time to time we passed old villages poised, with a mediæval pride and disregard for convenience, upon high and lofty summits. Here, as at Aristot and Bar, the rude barons of the day built their fortresses and castles dominating the valley, and were constantly at war with each other or in revolt against their overlords. But their days have now utterly gone by. Their castles, that seemed so impregnable, are in ruins; and their people, who clung for centuries after their fall to their eyries in the mountains, are now leaving them fast for the modern townlets and villages by the river.

Below the old Château of Bar the Segre is crossed by the Pont de Bar, now of wood, but in the eleventh century an

arch of solid masonry. Here it was that the good Bishop Armengol fell into the river and was drowned while supervising its construction. Yet he built to some purpose; for the French in 1794, when they were retreating before the Spaniards, spent a whole day in their efforts to blow it up. Through the Middle Ages, while knight and baron laid heavy hands upon the people, the Church fulfilling her vocation, built here at the Pont de Bar a hospital for the succour of the pilgrim and the wayfarer. Its place is taken to-day by the Baths of St. Vincent, to which Spaniards resort in summer to take the sulphurous waters. A big "hydro" stands by the side of the road, offering hospitality a shade less primitive than that of the local inns.

Leaving the Baths of St. Vincent, the carriage road presently comes to an end at a small hamlet, and an iron chain laid across a bridge indicates that the resources of the State are at an end, and that further progress must be made along a private road, so primitive that it is with difficulty the Catalan farmers succeed in taking their bullock waggons along it. There is exactly space for one vehicle, and as I rode along it I came upon one making its laborious way up the hill towards me. At one point a slight curve in the road left room for my horse, and here, pressed close against the hillside, I waited for the waggon to pass.

It was a solemn affair. The farmer approached me, stepping backwards like an usher, tapping the yoke with his long wand, and uttering a low warning note, while the mighty cattle swayed slowly forward, their large eyes full of alarm, until we were nearly abreast. Then the outer edge of the road, which was shale sodden with rain, suddenly gave way, a wheel sank, and upon the instant the cattle plunged instinctively forward. I thrust my horse past the wheels, and the transit was accomplished. But it was a close thing, and a pair of noble cattle just escaped the fate of the good St. Armengol in the rushing waters below.

In places the road became better, where, leaving the steep mountain-side, it traversed the level meadows; and a feeling of joy came over me at finding myself once more in the saddle with a man riding behind me, and the open road ahead. The sky was heavy with grey clouds, a fine rain was falling about

me, and at any other time my surroundings must have seemed dismal and depressing. Yet my spirits rose high with the journey, and the pleasant action of the good beast under me brought with it its customary joy. The rain continuing, we crossed the plank bridge at Martinet, and found shelter under the roof of the best inn.

Here in the parlour was a large party assembled, and the table was well supplied with strong meats and heady wines and such food as the Catalan loves. It was a convivial party, assembled for some ceremonial purpose, and the men talked and the women laughed, and the blue smoke rose and hung in a cloud about them. In the outer room the muleteers and other travelling folk were seated at a long bare table, while in the small kitchen the women of the house, including the innkeeper's daughter, a strikingly handsome girl, were busy with the cooking. Here I found a warm corner by the fire, and the means of drying myself in pleasant company.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the rain still falling, I left the inn at Martinet to continue my journey. The proprietor clapped me on the back, and the pretty daughter of the house shook my hand by way of compensation. She made a wry-face at the weather outside, sympathetically observed that it was *mal temps*, and, in fact, a perfect deluge. But in truth the rain was light and little more deterring than English rain. Though my feet grew cold in the stirrup, and the weather was depressing, I continued to enjoy the ride. Old feudal villages still looked down upon us from the mountains, and at Casteil Marti we reached the formidable ruins of an old castle, standing upon a great rock in the centre of the valley, with the Segre swirling and curving about its base in almost a complete circle. It was just the kind of site for a strong castle dominating a great thoroughfare that a feudal lord would have selected before the invention of guns. Built in the tenth century, it fulfilled its purpose for many hundred years; but its day has long since closed, and no one pays any attention to it now. The river here was richly wooded, and the scene on this grey day was romantic and beautiful. The clouds hung heavy over the Sierra del Cadi, just showing its steep battlements, and hinting at what one might have

seen on a brighter day. Opposite there opened the long Valley of La Llosa, stamped with ineffaceable memories of its glacial past, the castle beside it but a thing of yesterday. The Valley of La Llosa climbs to its source in some lakes high up in the mountains on the frontier of Andorra. Through this wild country the Maréchal de Noailles dragged his guns to the siege of Urgell in 1691, thus avoiding the Valley of the Segre.

Soon after leaving Casteil Marti the church-tower of Bellver came in sight, and then the whole profile of this haughty little town, placed high on its commanding hill. At sunset the clouds lifted, showing the high peaks and the massive front of the Sierra del Cadi, glittering with fresh snow, and giving promise of a brilliant day on the morrow.

CHAPTER III

BELLVER TO PUIGCERDA

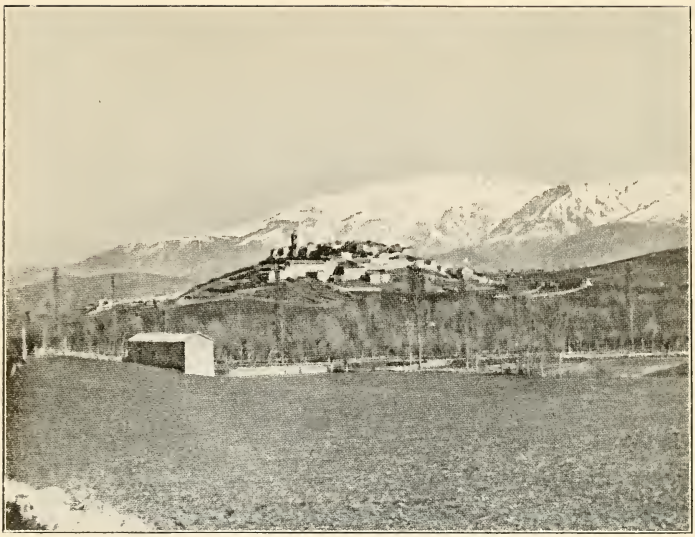
AN OLD BRIDGE

I ROSE the next morning at six o'clock to find the sun streaming into my chamber, and I walked up to the top of the hill on which Bellver stands a hundred and seventy feet above the level of the river. Here I stood in the old heart of the little town, founded so long ago, upon a Christmas Day in the year 1225, by Nunõ Sancho, Lord and Prince of the Roussillon and the Cerdagne. Here stood as of old, the church, and the *plaza* with its official buildings and its arcades like those of Puigcerda and Urgell. It was more like the cloister of a monastery than the market-place of a prosperous town, for the tides of life no

longer flow here. Lower down, near the river and the road, the new Bellver is growing, regardless of its mediæval pride and fear, and thinking only of what is most convenient. All over this country, from Perpignan to Urgell, there is the same spirit moving upon the face of its ancient towns and villages, the desire to have done with the Middle Ages, with loop-holed walls and inaccessible sites, and to reach out hands after the prizes of modern life.

The church, as I entered it, seemed to reflect the spirit of the times; for it was almost empty. The priest stood alone before his altar, and two sad women in black were his only congregation. I climbed up to the belfry for the view which gave its name of Bel-Vezer to this little town in the days of Nunõ Sancho. At my feet lay the sunlit valley, its meadows heavy with dew, and about it in a circle the clear-cut mountains white with new-fallen snow. The river ran its winding course, here rejoicing in the splendour of the morning, there still veiled in the blue shadows of departing night. An old tower and some ruins of battlemented walls impending above it spoke of warlike days and forgotten deeds of arms. There, whence the sun had risen, glowed the lovely valley of the Cerdagne; yonder, where it must set, was Urgell, the princely city whence I had come; on the south the land of Baga, where Ripoll shelters, and the rivers run down to Barcelona by the sea; and on the north the cold heights of Andorra, misty and violet in the morning light. It was a view that can have changed but little since the days when the old belfry tower was first built.

At half-past seven I left in the diligence for Puigcerda. I sat by the driver, having paid a double fare for this privilege and for the use of a four-wheeled break, in preference to the customary *tartane*. An old man and a crippled woman were my travelling companions, and I hoped they realized that they owed the comfort of the break to me, for the *tartane* is no bed of roses. Moreover one can see nothing from it of the country through which one is passing; though the people who use it are so indifferent on this subject that even when they can look out, as from a break, they prefer to let down its curtains and shut themselves darkly within.



BELLVER (*page* 309)

THE FOREST OF FANGES (*page* 324)

To face page 310

The King's Highway, as we bumped along it, proved shamefully bad except for a mile or two at each end. It followed no direct line, but wound in and out amongst the villages; and from time to time we stopped to give the mules a rest and the driver an opportunity of a gulletful of wine and the gossip of the little inns. At the Col de Saig it reached its climax of beauty. The mules, with their forty bells ringing, climbed slowly up the steep hill which divides the Cerdagne from the plain of Bellver. About us and before us lay the good brown earth, deepened in colour by the recent rain and marked with the long furrows of the plough. Against the skyline the superb cattle of the country, brown and velvety black about the shoulders, were moving slowly, the steam blowing visibly this cold bright morning from their nostrils, the ploughman's lithe figure behind; and towering high above them, against the blue sky, the snowy white mass of the Puig Mal. It was a picture of indescribable charm, of the world in its prime, and of the first husbandman cleaving the bountiful earth. It might have furnished Virgil with an immortal line or Theocritus with an idyll.

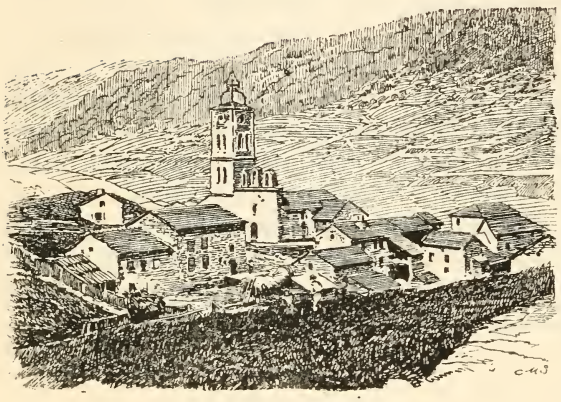
A moment later we were over the summit of the Col, and there below us lay the lovely vale of the Cerdagne, serene and wide, with soft shadow and sunlight lying across it, and Puigcerda like an army encamped upon its distant hill.

BOOK X

THE RETURN TO FRANCE

CHAPTER I

THE ELECTRIC RAILWAY



MATEMALE

At Puigcerda I was on familiar ground once more, with the feeling that my travels were now nearly at an end. Yet a change had come over Puigcerda. There was an air of bustle in its quiet streets, a display of bunting, the tricolour mingling its folds with the red and yellow of Spain, and at Tixairés, where I had lodged during my previous stay, a green and gold omnibus drawn by three powerful horses was drawn up at the door. It was the opening day of the new electric railway from Mont Louis to Bourg-Madame, and Puigcerda was preparing to profit by French enterprise, more vigorous than its own. I drove off, therefore, in the green bus, which was full of Town Councillors and the Mayor, to see the first train arrive from Mont Louis. At the station there was already assembled a vast number of omnibuses, breaks, motor-cars, and touts with a greedy air, ominous of the time

when the sweet Cerdagne will be an exploited Switzerland. The station bell rang and the train ran in, punctual to the fraction of a minute, several magnates of the Chemin de Fer du Midi descending from her, with well-groomed beards, gloves, and the air of distinction that high office and life in a great metropolis confer upon people. There was a little ceremony of reception. Senhor Marti looking spruce and able, made a little speech, the directors shook hands with a good-humoured cordiality, the motor-cars and the buses were filled, and everyone moved off for lunch to Puigcerda.

Two hours later I took the train to Mont Louis, the first train since the beginning of things to proceed in that direction, and the forerunner of the great railway that will presently connect, not only Mont Louis, but the whole of this forgotten territory, with the outer world. The beautiful landscape deployed about us, the white roads, the rich cornfields, the green flower-embroidered meadows, the villages, like Llo, with their old towers "of the times of the Seigneurs," the farm of Colonel Carbonnel so sheltered and comfortable in its little valley, the small railway-stations, all brand-new and promising so well with their cool green blinds and unsullied walls and platforms and their freshly-papered dwelling-rooms above. All these small things, which the impatient traveller takes for granted, are big things here, and the coming of the railway is a great event. The old "dillys" must now be pensioned off, the weary horses sent to their long rest, the rustic inns refurnished to meet the demands of a more exacting day. Through the sleepy summer haze a new life is pulsing, and the Cerdagne, which has so long lain secluded, a relic of bygone centuries, is feeling at last the impact of modern things.

CHAPTER II

FONT ROMEU AND THE UPLANDS OF THE TET

FÔRET DE LA MATTE

At Mont Louis I met Monsieur and Madame X——, who live in Paris, and, unlike most of their compatriots, have a passion for seeing the world, to which they devote the summer of each year. In their company I set out one morning for Font Romeu — the Pilgrim's Water—which lies in the midst of dark pine-woods on the heights beyond Mont Louis, some nine kilometres away. It is a pleasant drive there through the perfumed woods, and it takes one quite away from Mont Louis and its bastions, and the bare uplands about the Col de la Perche, into a country of green pasturelands and running waters and heavy shade; a country which harks back far beyond the days of Louis Quatorze, for it was owned, when Edward the Confessor still sat upon the throne of England, by the Benedictine monks of St. Martin's. In their hands these pasturelands and forests remained for seven hundred years, and it is to their care that we owe their survival to this day.

Some time in the eleventh century, to judge by the antique features of the Black Virgin which still survives, a chapel was built here, and the people came from all over the country-side to be healed of their ills. The legend of the country-side tells of the miraculous finding of the statue, buried under the soil, near a fountain, through the persistence of a bull, which dug at the earth with his horns and would not be driven away. The fame of the

Virgin grew, and ever since, Font Romeu has been a place of annual pilgrimage, to which French and Spaniards alike resort. Near the hermitage there is a Calvary on a hill, with twelve chapels of the Cross depicting the closing scenes in the Passion of Christ. Upon the pictures all sorts of people have scribbled their names, evidently blind to their tragic purport; so callous and accustomed does the world become to things which in everyday life would move it to pity and sympathy. The place of the Calvary is beautiful with light and shade and green pastures shining vividly under the dark trees, and the air is laden with the music of vast herds of moving cattle which come up here in summer from the communes to which the woods belong. The view that expands from the platform of the Calvary is one of the most beautiful in all this country; reaching far and wide over the perfect vale of the Cerdagne to the Sierra del Cadi, the mountains of Andorra, and the great mass of the Carlitte, while to the east the main axis of the Pyrenees stretches away to its meeting with the sea.

The Hermitage is a collection of rude buildings, including an ice-cold pool in which the sick plunge, and a chapel whose walls are covered from floor to ceiling with *ex-votos* of arms, legs, heads, locks and big twists of women's hair, and inscriptions recording gratitude to the Virgin for cures effected in response to prayer, and other miraculous aid. Thus, the parents of a child which fell out of a train and was unhurt thank the Blessed Mother of Heaven for her protection. The images of the Virgin and Christ, dressed up, are of a primitive Spanish caste, and evidently very old. A wayside shrine in the woods, like those which are so numerous in Andorra, marks another sacred spot, and here we found a peasant woman kneeling alone upon the paving stones outside, immersed in prayer. Here also, upon a ledge overlooking the entire Cerdagne, is now building the new Grand Hotel of the Compagnie du Midi, which is to have 400 rooms and every imaginable comfort. This is a great enterprise; and when the hotel is finished the solemn woods will be peopled with a horde of cosmopolitan visitors, and a new era will begin in the long story of Font Romeu.

We returned from our drive at eleven o'clock, and after

lunch I spent a blissful half-hour, all too short, lying upon a grassy slope of the ramparts of Mont Louis, watching the startling blue outline of the Pyrenees reaching from the Cambre d'Ase in successive peaks to the Canigou, where it thrusts out its mighty bulwarks into the Roussillon plain. The swallows were flying in hundreds overhead, and about me spread the green ramparts, the lichened roofs, and the old-fashioned dormer windows of this early eighteenth-century town. Wonderfully tranquil and still it was, and for an idle man perfection. On such a day in June, Mont Louis is the kind of place to come and dream in, and my inn next door, the little Hôtel Jambon, which is as old as Mont Louis itself, is in keeping with its sentiment. A few yards from the ramparts, unchanged since it first came into existence, it remains in the possession of the family who came here from Languedoc to build it when Louis Quatorze was King.

Soon after noon we started for La Bouillouse; which means that we followed the Tet whence it falls under the walls of Mont Louis, to near its source under the Pyrenean snows. This is a beautiful drive through country only recently opened to wheeled traffic, and it carries one through dark forests and green meadows into the seclusion of the High Pyrenees. The river is always near at hand, and always, except for one ominous moment, a lively and beautiful creature. It is a dark silvery stream very different to the river familiar to those who know it only below Mont Louis. In places it comes foaming down in white cascades over great boulders, through sheer and precipitous gorges, shut in by high mountains, like a river in the Tyrol; and at others it flows tranquilly and at peace across green meadows, shallow and clear as glass, with its low grassy banks, the haunt of vast herds of cattle and of brood-mares with their young. One comes upon these cattle and horses feeding, apparently unowned, with no human soul in sight, the cattle moving solemnly along the edge of the woods, the horses standing knee-deep in the complacent waters, alive with swift-glancing trout; and it is like a picture of a long bygone age, when man had not yet come to tame these wild creatures and convert them to his use. You would never dream, if

ON THE ROUTE TO BOUILLOUSE, THE CARLITTE IN THE DISTANCE (*page* 316)

THE NEW LAKE, BOUILLOUSE (*page* 316)

you were dropped here suddenly, that this was a corner of densely-peopled industrious France; and there is nothing in common between it and the wide, windy plain of the Roussillon, the land of olives, of the cypress and the vine, which spreads out a few miles lower down, enriched by these same waters.

This romantic valley owes its strange contrasts and peculiar type of beauty to causes which lie upon its surface. Its air of loneliness and of great wooded solitudes is due to its great elevation, which forbids cultivation. For more than half the year it lies buried under heavy snow. Its wild and rugged character is due to the steep slope of the mountains, which here descend rapidly towards the plain (the Tet falls 9,500 feet in eighty miles), and to the fact that in bygone times a great glacier took its implacable course through this valley, working its mighty will upon all that stood in its path. Upon both sides of the little foaming, tumbling river the granite masses lie broken and shattered and changed into fantastic forms by the action of the ice. And its soft grassy plains, like the Pla dels Abeillans and the Pla de Barrès, are survivals of old lakes, where the ice first yielded to the sun. The Pla de Barrès survived as a lake till comparatively recent times. Its tradition tells how it suddenly broke its barriers, and how its pent-up waters went thundering down the valley in a great wall 300 yards high; and this, it seems possible, was the flood which wrecked the old monastery of St. Andrew of Exalada, oldest of all in this country, in the year 878. But to-day all traces of conflict are gone, it would seem, for ever; and the brood-mares as they whisk their tails, knee-deep in the meandering stream, and their whinnying foals, and the slow patient cattle on the banks, bear witness to a profound content.

Above these quiet passages the river foams in turbulent wrath through the gorge known as the Mal Pas, and the road carries one beside it to the upland world of La Bouillouse. Here we came upon the old marshes, through which in past years the river, crystal clear from its high sources, used to flow in visible disdain of their darker waters; but now an immense barrage of cut granite stretches across the valley from mountain to mountain, and behind this the

river has built up a lake in which the snows of the peak of Peric are mirrored. The scene is one of cold tyranny rather than of beauty. Nothing could exceed the formal ugliness of the granite wall, thrust into these wild haunts of Nature, or the devastation wrought of rejected splinters and fragments of shattered stone. The old charm of the Bouillouse marshes has gone for ever. In its place there is a reservoir of water, which helps to save the cultivated plains below in times of drought and to regulate the irrigation of the valley from season to season. The philosophic traveller may decide which appeals to him more. But of what Science is capable in the way of cool ferocity he may judge by standing below the barrage, where the whole river for a portion of its course lies pent up and reduced to ignominy in two pipes of iron like those of a city sewer. Happily, it escapes once more to live its own joyous and varied life all down the Valley of the Tet, till it ends in the blue Mediterranean.

When we got back in the evening from our long drive, we found a change had come over Mont Louis. Its old cobbled streets were full of soldiers, 1,200 of them, the band was playing in the *place*, officers in uniform were seated outside the café of the Hôtel de France, and every vista was bright with the red and blue of the French infantry. The old fortress town had suddenly come to life again, and Prosperity was once more shedding her fickle favours upon the citizens. Monsieur and Madame X——, whose genial company I had enjoyed throughout the day, sat with me outside the café, and we enjoyed and criticized the scene before us. We were at one in appreciating the French soldier, but found ourselves less enthusiastic about the French officers, so many of whom wear glasses and look like weary professors and ineffectual young men. The Colonel?—Well, as to the Colonel, Madame expressively shrugged her shoulders. I believe she meant to imply that he was an old woman.

And in the day of battle, when France is next fighting for her life and her continuity amongst the nations, will she find in her armies men who will lead them to victory as did her Neys and Soults and Augereaus under the compelling eye and hand of another Napoleon? One hopes so, but one doubts; for the fire and high spirit seem to a casual and

perhaps a superficial eye to have gone out of the upper classes of the French army.

We discussed many other things, sitting here outside the café of the Hôtel de France in the intimacy engendered by a day of travel, and so eventually we came down to the problem of the Old Maid.

"Tell me, monsieur," said Madame; "we are going to England next summer, and shall, of course, see much for ourselves of your great country, but there is one thing we are very curious about: Is it true that you have three million more women than men in England? And is that the reason, perhaps"—and here Madame X—— hesitated while a shade of something like distress clouded her face—"that your ladies whom we see over here in France dress—like—men—and—travel—about—alone?" She said the words very slowly, as with reluctance and with the fear of giving offence.

"And one other thing," said Monsieur X—— as we rose: "in London, is it true that one can do nothing without the permission of le policeman?"

But here my patriotism welled up. "Monsieur X——," I replied, "you will find when you go to London that the policeman is your best friend, always and entirely at your service. 'When in doubt ask the policemen,' as our Shakespeare says."

"*Ah! Le Shakispeare, oui, oui,*" *said Monsieur X——,* "*j'ai lu bien votre Shakispeare, 'Le Roi Lear,' et 'l'Hamlette'; votre Miltonne aussi, 'Le Paradaisse Loste.' Savez, Monsieur, j'ai fait des grandes études dans la langue Anglaise. . . . Mais dites moi dong—le policeman, parle-t-il quelques mots de Français, croyez-vous?*"

BOOK XI

THE VALLEYS OF THE AGLY AND THE AUDE

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY HOUSES AT ST. PAUL DE FENOUILLET

THE Valley of the Agly, or the Eagle, is the last of the three river valleys which make up the greater part of the Department of the Pyrénées - Orientales; but it is unlike them in every respect. The Tet and the Tech come straight down from the high snow-covered mountains in one continuous line to the sea, and from source to exit they are contained within the department, and are bordered by people of Catalan blood. But the Agly, taking its source at the Rock of Bugarach in the Department of the Aude, forces its way at right angles to two parallel ranges of hills, in the most amazing manner, through wild and truculent gorges rent by some violent convulsion of Nature, and does not enter upon the Catalan districts till far down upon its way to the Mediterranean. The history of this remarkable valley has followed its geography, and it was only after the Treaty of the Pyrenees that its two sections were united under one Crown and in one depart-

ment. But the Catalan and the Languedocian still hold themselves apart, each using the national appellation of the other as a term of contempt and abuse. At Estagel this invisible line begins, but in truth the whole character and scenery of the Valley of the Agly strike the eye as utterly unlike that of the Tet the moment one ascends a little way into it from the plain.

Far down towards the sea, where the immemorial highway passes by the Lake of Salses on its way from Narbonne to Spain, is the town of Rivesaltes, where plain and valley meet. It has long been famed for its rich wines, and before the phylloxera came to destroy it, its Muscat was esteemed throughout France. Close by it at Peyrestortes, the Spaniards, during the wars of the Revolution, sustained a severe defeat at the hands of the Deputy Cassanyes, whose memory is still green amongst his countrymen. It was a notable battle, for it thrust back the wave of Spanish invasion, and proclaimed the Catalans this side of the Pyrenees once for all a French community. Upon the adjoining Corbières, haughtily placed, is the old feudal tower of Tautavel, a landmark visible from afar, challenging in its pride the other high castles and towers of the Eastern Pyrenees.

At Cases-de-Peine, there are remnants of another of these old feudal châteaux, which in bygone days owed allegiance to the Viscounts of Castell' Nou, and a romantic spot, known as the "Salt de la Donzella," which commemorates the episode of a Christian maiden who flung herself in despair over the cliffs to escape from her Saracen pursuers.

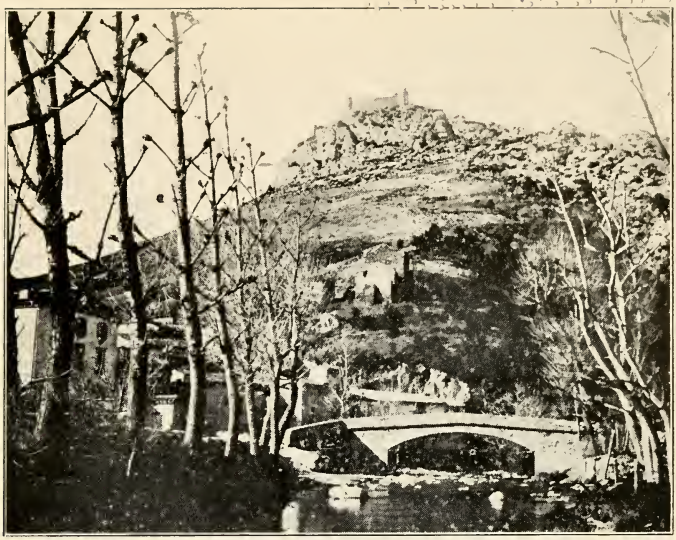
At Estagel, where Catalonia ends and Languedoc begins, the people of this little town of 3,000 inhabitants are proud of their famous citizen, François Arago. His bust by David is displayed above an old mediæval gateway of the town, and his memory is kept bright by a holiday, La Festa de l'Arago, on which occasion an orator recounts the deeds of the great mathematician at the foot of his statue. It is only in France that Intellect and Art are recognized in this way. They like to think, these proud people, that it was in the little primary school of Estagel, amongst the humblest of their children, of whom he was one, that he learnt the first lessons that disciplined his mind.

From here, while the train ascends the straight valley of the Maury, the Agly makes its singular détour by La Tour de France and Raziguères and Ansignan, under old fortified villages and the remains of feudal castles, till it cuts its way back through the grey mountain-wall, and meets the rail again at St. Paul de Fenouillet. Dominant above the valley of the Maury, though which the train has run, is the Château of Queribus, the frontier castle of the Roussillon. It is as old as Castell' Nou, and was owned early in the eleventh century by Bérenger, a son of the Count Bernard of Besalu, whose name appears so often in these pages. During the Albigensian Wars it was a stronghold of the persecuted Cathari, and made a valorous defence before it was taken by the Seneschal of Carcassonne. Like all the rest of this country, it is rapt in the sentiment of the Middle Ages.

As one approaches St. Pol of a summer evening, the valley glows with picturesqueness and light, while its great rocky peaks soar up on either hand, blue and heliotrope and rose, in the falling sunlight.

St. Pol itself has charms. Beside its old walls, now converted into dwelling-places, there are mighty plane-trees and a cool green canal, which waters its orchards of peach-trees, its vines and its roses, and helps to turn the lathes of a pipe factory, which is lodged in an old building heavy with wistaria and distinguished by a solemn cypress-tree. There is a *place*, dappled with light and shade, and proud of its monument to a hero of St. Pol, who became a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour at twenty-one, and died amidst the snows of Russia, after taking part in some of the greatest of Napoleon's campaigns. You can see his portrait here in bronze, and it speaks eloquently of those great bygone times, and carries one away, as if by magic, from the fierce sunlight of St. Pol to the white frozen banks of the Borodino, and to the rank and file of the Old Guard, drawn up under the watchful eyes of the little man in the green cut-away coat and cocked hat, who held them all, as he held Europe, under the spell of his amazing genius. No wonder St. Pol is proud of its share in those great achievements.

There is the Chapitre, with its octagonal stone cupola, and its once beautiful chapel, now used as a barn, with hay



OLD FEUDAL CHÂTEAU OF PUYLAURENS (*page* 324)

INTERIOR OF THE CHÂTEAU OF PUYLAURENS (*page* 324)

and harness piled amidst its bas-reliefs of Christ, and horses stabled in one of its rooms under a stately and ornamented ceiling. Its beauty and its desolation alike challenge the attention of the passing traveller; and its history seems to point to the moral government of the world. One of the first of the abbeys which came into existence here after the Moslem had gone, it was merged, for its sins, in the Abbey of Cuxa, by command of the Count Bernard of Besalu, in the year of our Lord 1000. In later days it became the seat of a Dean and Chapter, under the Bishop of Alet, who had much ado to curb the licence of its inmates. The Revolution came, with its blind, fiery wrath, and swept its decaying institutions away. The noble buildings were sold to some vulgar proprietor, its ancient cloisters were smashed to pieces, its old refectory and hall were knocked down and converted into mean habitations, and the filth of a farmyard was suffered, as it is to-day, to lie upon its inner courts. The heavy hand of Fate had found it out at last.

There is the parish church of St. Peter, with its sombre fortified air and its memories of a bygone siege during the wars of Francis I., who lost all but honour at Pavia, and the Emperor Charles V.; and hard by it there is the inn of St. Pol, which has been in the same family for a hundred and forty years, and still caters for the traveller in old eighteenth-century fashion.

Across the valley where the Agly forces its way through the Corbières are the gorges of St. Antoine de Galamus, stupendous and wonderful, where the river foams and makes pools far down in the profound narrow spaces, the cliffs soaring mightily above its scarcely visible water. A magnificent road made by the French, who have inherited the Roman genius, now takes its smooth, determined way through the gorges halfway between the cliff summits and the pools below, literally cut in places out of the perpendicular wall. One might drive a four-in-hand along it now; but before it was made these defiles of the Agly were remote and desolate, and all but inaccessible. Hidden away in a cavern in the gorge is the Chapel of St. Antoine, with cells for those who find in loneliness and solitude compensation for the disappointments of the world. Hundreds of feet above, across

"the little strip of blue" which makes the sky, the eagles wheel; the sun glows, turning the cliff-summits into visions of impalpable light, and the stars shine out at night with their messages from infinite space. One need not be a hermit to enter into the strange charm and extraordinary appeal of this singular cleft in the mountains.

Across the wide valley to the farther mountain-wall, which the Agly has to cut in two before it can make its way untrammelled to the sea, is the watering-place of St. Pol, with its smart little *établissement*, very modern and up-to-date. Here the river swirls and foams, cutting the smooth pedestals of the mountain into razor-blades and "pot-holes," which a superstitious peasantry attribute to the fairies of the gorge. No one will pass here at night lest he should inadvertently touch their linen put out to dry, and so become petrified or have his limbs suddenly made brittle like glass. The people under cover of their fairy-tales appreciate the stupendous cataclysm which in some bygone day rent the mountains in twain, and sent the Agly, unlike all the other rivers of the land, wandering *across* them, instead of confining herself to a direct course.

Soon after leaving St. Pol, the train, which has no further connection with the Agly, ascends the watershed which divides this valley from that of the Aude, and the Pyrénées-Orientales from Languedoc. The great castle of Puylaurens rises above it, placed upon a rock above Pradelles, amidst an amphitheatre of grey precipitous mountains, which "stand up like the thrones of Kings." Even in its ruins this old feudal castle is full of majesty, and eloquent of the days that are gone. At Axat, under the dark sombre Forest of Fanges, it meets the Aude, which has come thundering down 4,000 feet from the high Valley of Capcir, and thence follows the river through passages of beauty, through gorges and open smiling meadows, past the comfortable town of Quillan and the château of the Ducs de Joyeuse, standing four-square by the river, and the ruined but still beautiful cathedral of Alet. In the distance, against the skyline, soar up many a *château-fort*, many a castle bearing a proud name. One feels here, even more than in the Roussillon, in a land of chivalry, rapt in memories of old wars and bygone times.

The country is varied and beautiful, rising into pinnacles and swelling hills, which stand clear-cut against the sunlit sky, and at its far end the Valley of the Aude opens out, and we arrive with its waters under the immemorial walls and grey towers of Carcassonne.

How bravely the old feudal city stands up above the plain ! One expects to see it fluttering with pennons and banners, its gates opening to give exit to knights and men-at-arms ; one expects to hear its trumpets blowing and its clarions calling to battle, so manifestly is it still a city of the Middle Ages, upon which the passing of five hundred years has left no trace.

BOOK XII

CARCASSONNE

I. La Ville Basse

THE CHAPEL, ST. PAUL DE FENOUILLET

The modern town at the foot of La Cité is scarcely less attractive and interesting in its way than the splendid fortress on the hill. It is only relatively modern, for its foundations were laid by St. Louis, and it bore the brunt of a terrible visit from the Black Prince, who burnt it almost to the ground. "We marched," wrote Sir John Wingfield, one of the companions of the Prince, "through the Seignory of Tholouse, and took many towns enclosed before we came to Carcassonne, which we also took—a town greater, stronger, and fairer than York. But as well this as all the towns in the country (which we took) were burnt, plundered, and destroyed."

At Carcassonne Thibaud de Barbazon the Seneschal hung chains across the streets to stop the rush of the knights, but the Prince's fiery valour bore all before him. Quarter of a million gold crowns were offered him as a ransom, but refused, and the lower town was given to the flames. This circumstance is well remembered in Carcassonne to this day.

One steps into it from the railway-station, across the Canal du Midi—old seventeenth-century water with its romantic name*—and is at once in the midst of the Jardin des Plantes, with its great umbrageous trees, its splashing fountains, its flowers, and its light. Here is the old inn of St. Jean-Baptiste, musty and brown, like some old posting inn in England, with its carved wooden staircase and brass ball heads; and yet of the South, with its creamy tiles, and *patio* full of palms and figs and lemon-trees. The site, as everyone in Carcassonne hastens to tell you, is worthy of a modern "grand hotel"; but the old inn, which has been threatened for years, lingers on. Perhaps the good commercial folk of Carcassonne who wish to change it all, will realize in time that structural changes are not necessary to provide the traveller with good cooking and clean rooms; and that people who come to see an old city like to find in it an old inn, with something of the quiet air and courtliness of a less rampant age.

Past inn and square the straight street from the station runs through the heart of Carcassonne to the lower town. Though lined with bright shops, some of which are modern enough, it is narrow and cobbled, and evidently dates from early times. At the Place Carnot it opens out magnificently, and here under the mighty plane-trees, there is always life and light and movement. At night the scene it presents is a drama of life in a city of the Midi. Overhead there is the blue sky, glittering with stars; below, amidst the bright lights and the heavy shadows of the trees, the people gather outside the big cafés, and lounge against the walls of the houses, while the great marble fountain in the centre of the *place* splashes and flings its jet of living water, as it has done these two hundred years, and upon a white screen pictures of whatever is happening in the world are shown free. It is a life lived in the open air, under a beneficent sky—the life of the pagan, sensuous South.

Farther on, the street, narrowing again, passes under a majestic archway—the Porte des Jacobins—a relic of the old

* The Canal du Midi was made by Paul Riquet of Béziers in 1666–1681, and it cost him close upon a million and a half sterling. It links the Atlantic with the Mediterranean, and is fringed with cypresses throughout its lower course.

fortified town. Beyond it there is a vast open space with avenues of green trees, the Boulevard Barbés; and there are the cavalry barracks of great and imposing dimensions, after the manner of the eighteenth century. Dragoons with their plated helmets and horsehair plumes are numerous in Carcassonne, and soldiers fill its streets with animation. How different to all this is the quiet, silent, brooding old fortress on the hill, that for twenty centuries before the new town was made was the abode of its people! We shall come to it presently, but meanwhile, as I have said, modern Carcassonne is not to be despised.

The last time I was there was on the day of the national fête, and there was much afoot. As I stepped out of my hotel a regiment of infantry came swinging along the Boulevard Omer Sarraut, the trumpets and the band; the field officers on horseback, their golden epaulettes glittering in the sun; the junior officers on foot leading their companies, and the mass of the rank and file marching with the quick step and unmistakable *élan* of the French infantry. The regiment moved forward to its assigned place in the splendid Boulevard de la Préfecture, where was once the moat of the fortified city, and made a long line of red and blue under the overshadowing green of its plane-trees now a hundred years old. From the other end came the heavy cavalry, the steel and gold of their helmets shining in the sun, their black horse-tail plumes streaming behind them, their long heavy swords rattling in their scabbards—relics of mediæval war. The flanks of their horses were clipped into little squares, which made a pattern as of dappled satin.

Presently to these brave elements there were added other less imposing: the fat Pompiers, the solemn followers of Barbés with embroidered satin banners, and the civilian officials in belated evening dress and white kid gloves, looking as civilians always do upon such occasions—poor creatures beside their kinsmen of the sword and threatening bayonet. After all, this is not merely a matter of barbaric colour. The soldier with his brave plumage stands for heroic issues; and here in these conscript lands he is above all a patriot, a man visibly ready to die for his country. The civilian in his white kid is a *fonctionnaire*, also ready, we

may charitably suppose, to die for his country, but meanwhile not adverse to living comfortably upon it. Moreover, he is often old, heavy with good living, or bent with sedentary toil, decadent, puffy . . .; but Youth and Manhood march with the quick-stepping soldier and the plumed dragoon. So our homage as onlookers, with that of all the pretty little women out to see the show, goes naturally to the man-at-arms.

Halfway down the noble avenue, under the old walled belvedere of the préfecture, that was once the palace of the Bishop, is a stand decked out with bunting, into which the *fonctionnaires* climb, displaying their bald heads above the bars of colour to an indifferent world. But what a brave sight is that of the massed cavalry down the long vista of the trees, the fretting horses of the officers, the glancing light on casque and sabre!

Then the review begins; the trumpets screaming out the "Marseillaise," the General and his staff galloping up and down before and behind the troops, the whole mass of 2,000 men, rifles, swords, bayonets, lances, and mitrailleuses, marching bravely forward. There is no decadence here. Troops in France always give one at least the impression of fitness for war. When all is over the officers advance with the regimental standards and salute the civilian hierarchy, in whose midst sits the Préfet, symbol and type of the centralized bureaucracy of France. Everywhere and at all times, it seems, the Frenchman, who adores equality, must have set before him some visible head. The Préfet in his fine uniform steps down, the gentlemen in black and white follow him, the soldiers march away. The crowd breaks its ordered line and throngs the stately avenue. The review is over.

As a military spectacle it is a brave show; as a celebration of the national day it is formal, cold, and devoid of conviction. A few flags flutter at the windows of the houses.

One asks, Is the Third Republic also nearing its end? and how much longer will a chivalrous and martial people, proud of its mighty past, tolerate the drab of a commonplace bureaucracy, the humiliation of successive defeats? How long now will it be before some great soldier seizes the right to lead his people to furious war?

II. The City on the Hill

Such is the life that is lived to-day in Carcassonne of the Plain, a town that is called new, since it was built only by St. Louis some seven centuries ago; while the old Cité soars above it, grey and tragic, with its memories of two thousand years.

It stands upon one of those natural sites that must have been predestined for the occupation of men, for one of those strong places of war which are doomed by their very might to disaster. For it overlooks the fair Valley of the Aude, a link between the wild Atlantic and the blue, sail-flecked waters of the Mediterranean; it stands upon a steep escarpment like an eyrie above the plain, its horizon circled by the snowy bastions of the Pyrenees and the dark outlines of the Montagne Noir. It was the ultimate meeting-place of the Massilian seeking for the pelts and iron of the inland, and of the rough tribesmen eager for the bales and vanities of the South. It was at once the great outwork of the untamed people, where their lands bore down towards the civilization of Rome, and the starting-point of any great conqueror from the South, who, like Cæsar, might wish to make of it a weapon of attack upon Gaul.

It became a stronghold of the Visigoths, who kept within its battlements the treasures of their kings, and its history bears witness to some of the greatest of their warriors: Atolph, who married Placidia, sister of the Emperor Honorius; Theodoric, Alaric. The last of these famous names still lingers in the little neighbouring village of Alairac and in the Montagne d'Alaric, where the country people say he fought a great battle and was killed. In the big well within the fortress the children of Carcassonne believe that the Visigothic treasure still lies hidden.

When the Gothic power became concentrated in Spain, with Toledo for its capital, Carcassonne remained the far outwork of their dominions on the edge of Gaul, and for centuries it was the fortress of the Spanish Mark, owing its homage to Aragon, and not to France.

It felt the brunt of the Saracen invasions, and became one of the last strongholds of Islam before the Crescent was

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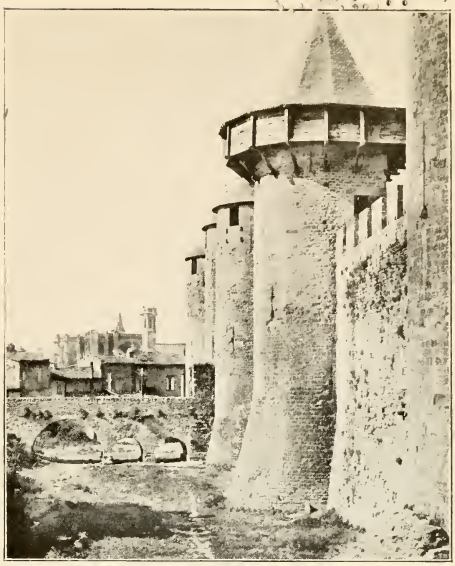


CARCASSONNE—THE CHÂTEAU (*page* 330)

CARCASSONNE—THE TWO BRIDGES (*page* 326)

driven back across the Pyrenees. It is, indeed, in this character of a frontier outpost that it has always, until modern times, stood before the world ; and it is this circumstance that made it, under the hand of St. Louis and of Philip le Hardi, the miracle of mediæval fortification which it is to-day. Until France became one, and the South was forced, once for all, into unwilling communion with the North, Carcassonne was ever the gage of battle, the strong place of arms about which the tides of conquest eddied and swirled from South to North and North to South. In 1355 it defied the Black Prince, who took and burnt the lower town in the course of his famous foray across Southern France from Bordeaux to Narbonne.

But, happily, it is not war alone that has left its mark upon this mighty fortress, for its fame is imperishably associated with that of the troubadours. There was a time when behind these grey walls Love was the supreme arbiter, and the minstrel who could indite a lay to his mistress was more favoured than knight or warrior.

Throughout the South this cult of Love fired the imagination of the people, and long after the last troubadour had sung within the walls of Carcassonne it lingered, to blossom once more in the "Trionfo d' Amore" of Petrarch. It reached its height at Carcassonne in the days of the Trencavel Viscounts, at the Court of the lovely Adelaide, niece of the King of France, and the idol of a host of Southern bards and troubadours, at whose head stood Alfonso, King of Aragon. Many of the glowing verses of those far-off days, nearly 750 years ago, still survive, and with their help, and that of the walls and towers and great court of the castle of the Trencavels in the heart of Carcassonne, one can still enter into the spirit of those times.

One of the first of Adelaide's admirers was the poor troubadour Arnold de Meyrveille, who, under the name of Belvezer, chanted his passion for the lovely Countess ; and some verses of his in the old Provençal language, commencing

"*La Franca Captenensa,*
Qu'ieu non posc oblidar,"

are still preserved, like faded rose-leaves, in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.

He was given a place at her Court, and ruffled it with many another votary in the art of *gai sçavoir*—with Raymond de Miraval, Pierre Raymond, Pons de Largarde, and the eccentric Pierre Vidal. Vidal fell passionately in love with the Lady Etiennette de Cerdagne, surnamed "La Louve de Pennautier," one of the stars at the Court of Adelaide. It is an old story how he carried his fantasy to the length of dressing in wolf-skins, and even living the life of a wolf in the woods, so that he was hunted as a wolf and torn by hounds, and, as he lay lying, asked to be carried and placed at the feet of his beloved lady. Etiennette was more worldly than her poor admirer, and preferred the attentions of Raymond Audiars, Lord of Miraval, and of one greater even than he—the Count of Foix—for which she was censured by the romantic taste of the age. A like fate befell Arnold de Meyrveille, whose pre-eminence in verse brought down upon him the jealousy of Alfonso of Aragon, and banishment from the Court of Adelaide. But for long after, from his shelter at Montpellier, he continued to lament the faithlessness of his mistress and the Courts of Love in which he had sung at Burlatz and at Carcassonne.

Meanwhile the loves of Alfonso and Adelaide drew the attention of the Provençal world, and Carcassonne was even besieged by the Count of Toulouse with the sole purpose of separating Alfonso, who had torn himself away, for a hurried visit to Spain, from the frail Adelaide.

The extent to which this cult of Venus was carried in the South, always half-pagan in its instincts, is exemplified in the old poem of "Aucassin and Nicolete," where the passionate lover declares that Paradise itself were no Paradise without his Nicolete:

"*In Paradise what have I to win? Therein I seek not to enter, but only to have Nicolete, my sweet lady that I love so well. For into Paradise go none but such folk as I shall tell thee now: Thither go the old priests and halt old men and maimed, who all day and night cower before the altars and in the ancient crypts. . . . These be they that go into Paradise; with them I have naught to make. But into Hell would I fain go; for into Hell*

fare the goodly clerks and goodly knights that fall in tourneys and great wars, and stout men-at-arms, and all men noble. With these will I go. And thither pass the sweet and gracious ladies that have two lovers or three, and their lords also thereto; and there go the gold and silver and the cloth of vair and grey, and the harpers and the minstrels, and the Prince of this World. With these would I gladly go, let me but have with me Nicolete, my most sweet friend."

This paganism took form in the Albigensian heresy, and brought down upon the unfortunate South all the thunders of the Church and the cupidity and violence of the Northern hosts, who, under the guise of a Crusade, marched to the pillage and destruction of a country richer and more favoured than their own. The protagonists in this drama included some of the most famous people of the time. There was the great Pope Innocent III., who was inspired by the conviction of the "awful authority and imprescriptible rights" of the Church, and an inflexible determination to annihilate all heresy; there was Simon de Montfort, the great captain, inspired by an icy confidence in God which quenched all the fires of his Southern adversaries; there was Raymond, Count of Toulouse, who was allied to the royal houses of Castille, Aragon, Navarre, France, and England, who was the greatest feudatory of France, and even in far-off Italy was esteemed the greatest Count on earth, while "his troubadour flatterers assured him that he was the equal of emperors—

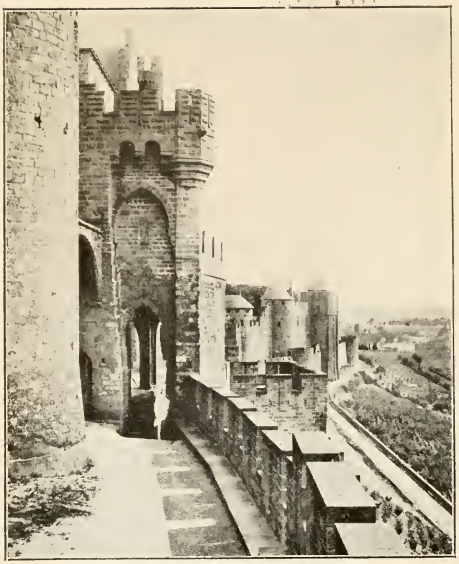
> "Car il val tan qu'En la soa valor
> Auri'assatz ad un Emperador";

there was the gallant young Viscount Raymond Roger, of Béziers and Carcassonne, twenty-four years of age, and the son of the lovely Adelaide, who had in the days of her youth and beauty turned so many poets' heads—the only one of them who emerges from this tragic story with honour, though it brought him death and ruin; there was the Papal Legate, Arnold of Citeaux, whose pitiless temper overbore all charity and mercy, so that at the holocaust of Béziers, when twenty thousand persons of all ages and both sexes were slain, and someone asked whether the Catholics should be spared, called out in a fervour of destruction: "*Kill them all, for God will*

know His own." As a foil to this ruthless Churchman, there was St. Dominic, working patiently and gently, trying to win back to the fold of Christ, by love and example, the erring people. And besides these there were the Kings of France and Spain, the politic Philip Augustus, and the chivalrous Don Pedro, troubadour and gallant, the very mirror of his age.

Pope Innocent III. lived to accomplish every fraction of his purpose by the complete extirpation of heresy from the Church; and St. Dominic, "the kindly in heart, the cheerful in temper, the winning of manner," gave his name to that Order which was soon to become known for its association with all the terrors of the Inquisition. The gallant Don Pedro, heroic of stature, the adored of women, the accomplished singer, the ideal knight and warrior, who with Aragon behind him might have shattered this conspiracy of the North, fell at the petty battle of Muret, a victim to his own gallantry and Southern temperament; while De Montfort, who brought every quality of constancy and heroism to bear upon the issue, and seemed likely at the time to inherit all the splendours of Raymond of Toulouse, left nothing behind him but his fame, and to his son bitterness, poverty, and disappointment. The Midi, which under its ancient Viscounts might have attained a sovereign independence, passed once for all, though not even to this day willingly, to the hegemony of the North.

As for Raymond of Toulouse, there is no chapter in the vicissitudes of human greatness more poignant than that which relates his subsequent history. He lost all—his pride, his honour, his dignity, his great estates, his far-spreading lands and illustrious titles, the very inheritance of his fathers. Stripped to the waist, this great prince, the equal of emperors, was flogged, with a halter about his neck, under the curious eyes of his own people, his shoulders dripping with blood. Driven by an implacable Church, he was compelled to crusade against his own subjects and to lead the infamous assault upon Beziers. But even these humiliations were without reward. He was reduced to asking but for one thing—his own life, and for his son the right of inheritance. His life was contemptuously spared, but his inheritance



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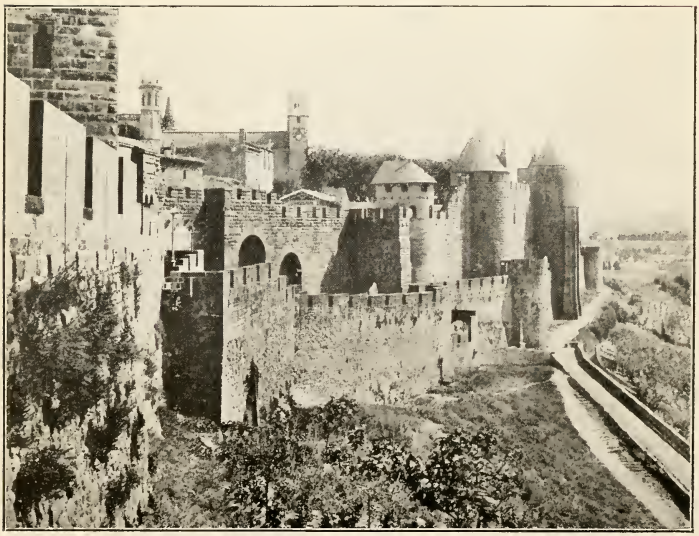

CARCASSONNE—THE CHÂTEAU (*page* 330)

passed away for ever from his house, and the life of his son was one long succession of misfortunes.

Thus finished the Albigensian Wars, with the ruin of the South and of all the great protagonists, save the Church, which triumphed over heresy, and the Crown of France, which extended its lands to the Mediterranean.

The story is one of the most tragic import, worthy in its great outlines of an epic drama, and its climax was reached here, under these very walls of Carcassonne, upon that summer day in 1209 when the armies of the North came down upon the devoted city and called upon it to surrender in the name of God.

With these incidents still fresh in my mind from the perusal, I walked out one day from La Cité, from the little Hôtel Jordy, that was once a bishop's palace, to look from a little way off at the old grey towers, the scene of this tragedy. It was in July, upon one of those amazingly still evenings that one gets in this country of the north-west wind. The sun was going down in a rose-haze of gold, and the corn-fields, fast yielding to the reaper, were of the colour of the sun. I could hear the little cheeping of birds, a voice far away in a field, the incessant murmur of the unchanging Aude where it curves at Mont Plaisir under the cypress-clad cemetery of the newer city. Down by the river there were orchards and clustering trees, and the little hamlet of Charlemagne. Near by, against the rosy sky, were outlined the walls and battlements, the blue towers of Carcassonne, while far away upon the horizon the fainter blue of the Cevennes lay in soft washes of colour.

It was a beautiful landscape, almost English in its softness, but luminous as the earth is luminous only in these lands of the South. I thought of all that had transpired within these silent walls and upon that blazoned plain, and of how one summer evening just about this time of year, when the corn was cut, the Count Raymond Trencavel, looking out from his proud castle, his invincible Carcassonne, saw the whole beautiful landscape about him become alive with the Crusading hosts. There amidst them he could descry the banners and pennons of the Duke of Burgundy,

the Earl of Leicester, the Counts of Nevers and St. Paul, and the silken standards of the Pope; and ever as he looked the great host came on in all the bravery of mediæval war, with its knights and archers, and footmen and steel-clad horse.

He put up a great fight, and his people bore themselves with the valour of despair. But the lack of water within the fortress was always its weakest point, and in the end the Church triumphed, the Crusaders entered in, and Raymond Roger, Count of Trencavel, of Carcassonne, and of Beziers, lay in a dark and noisome prison, where he died—some say of dysentery, and others of poison administered by De Montfort, but more likely of a broken heart. For when a man has lost all, Death is not long in coming.

Happily, as I have said, it is not of war alone that Carcassonne enshrines the memory. Its name, to all who love French literature, is associated with that charming French song in which an old peasant of Limoux tells how he has longed all his life to visit the embattled city with its grey towers visible afar off, but has never had time to leave his fields and the endless toil of the small proprietor. It was the birthplace also of Fabre d'Eglantine, the Revolutionary poet, who as a lad carried off the Prix d'Eglantine at the famous Collège du Gay Sçavoir at Toulouse, and in after-years, before he perished on a Paris scaffold, wrote the little idyll, "Il pleut, bergère, il pleut," and invented that Floral Calendar, which might well, from its beauty and aptness, have survived the Revolution.

Even to-day Carcassonne, though given over to commercialism, has not lost its love for poetry, its appreciation of dramatic art. I have seen five thousand people assembled there on a summer night in June, the open sky above a galaxy of stars, and immersed in the tragic fate of King Lear as unfolded in the great amphitheatre under the battlements of Philip le Hardi and the Gothic pinnacles of its old Cathedral of St. Nazaire. One can scarcely imagine a more romantic setting, and it were worth while going to Carcassonne if only to share in this wonderful experience.

GULF OF LIONS

SKETCH MAP

OF THE

EASTERN PYRENEES

TO ILLUSTRATE

TRAVELS IN THE PYRENEES

BY

V. C. SCOTT O'CONNOR

Boundary between France & Spain —.—.—.

Boundaries of Provinces .....

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